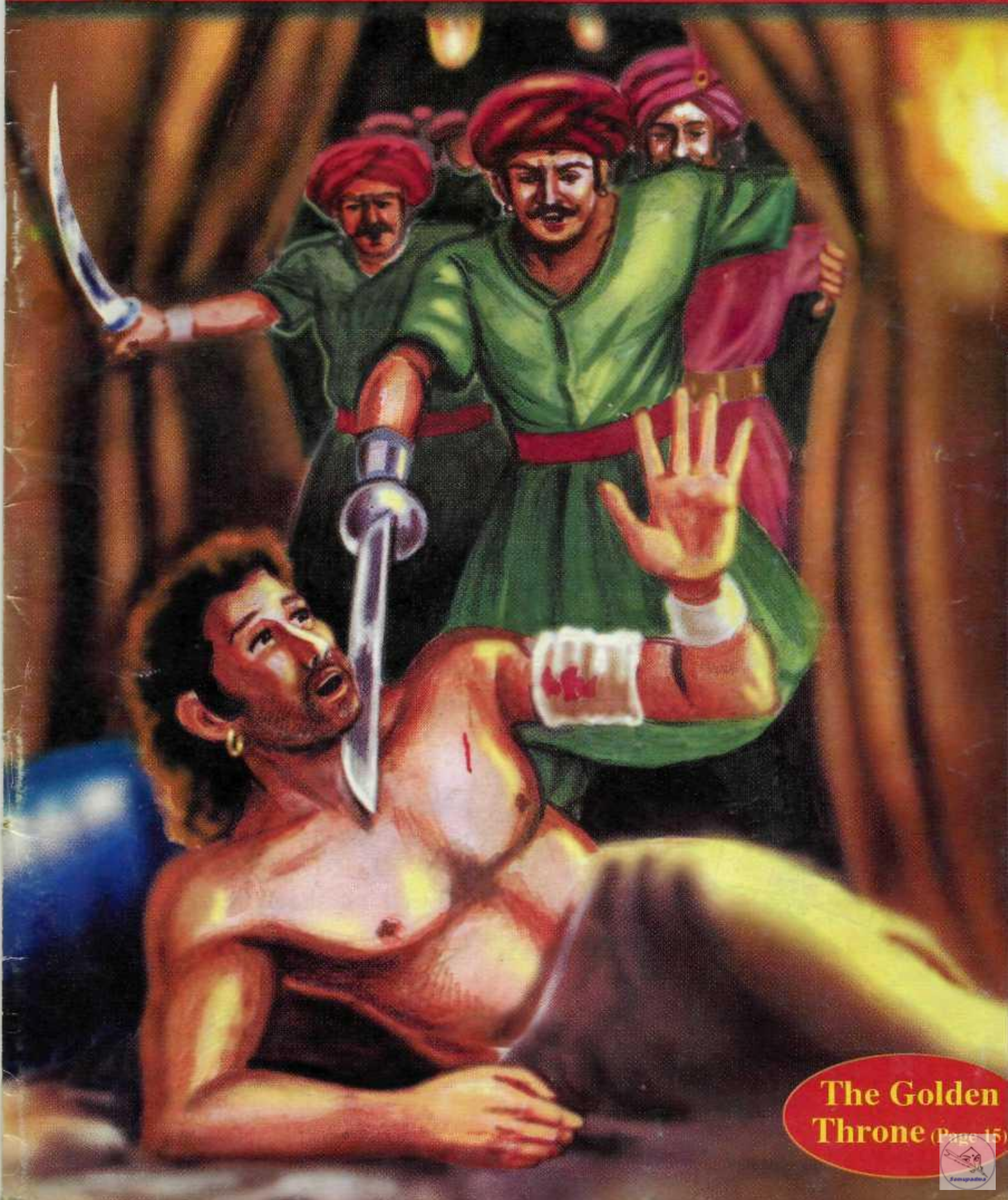




June 2000-Rs. 10/-

# CHANDAMAMA



**The Golden  
Throne** (Page 15)





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# CHANDAMAMA

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No. 6

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### HIGHLIGHTS



**The Golden Throne**



**The Saga of India**



**Unsolved Mysteries**



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**VISWAM**

Editorial Advisors  
**RUSKIN BOND**  
**MANOJ DAS**

Consultant Editor  
**K. RAMAKRISHNAN**

**ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO**  
Chandamama Magazine  
Division

Chandamama Buildings  
Vadapalani, Chennai-600026  
Tel/Fax : 4841778/4842087  
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## IN THE MIDST OF HOLIDAYS

"If all the year were playing holidays, to sport would be as tedious as to work", said Shakespeare. In other words, only those who work sincerely all the time can really enjoy holidays.

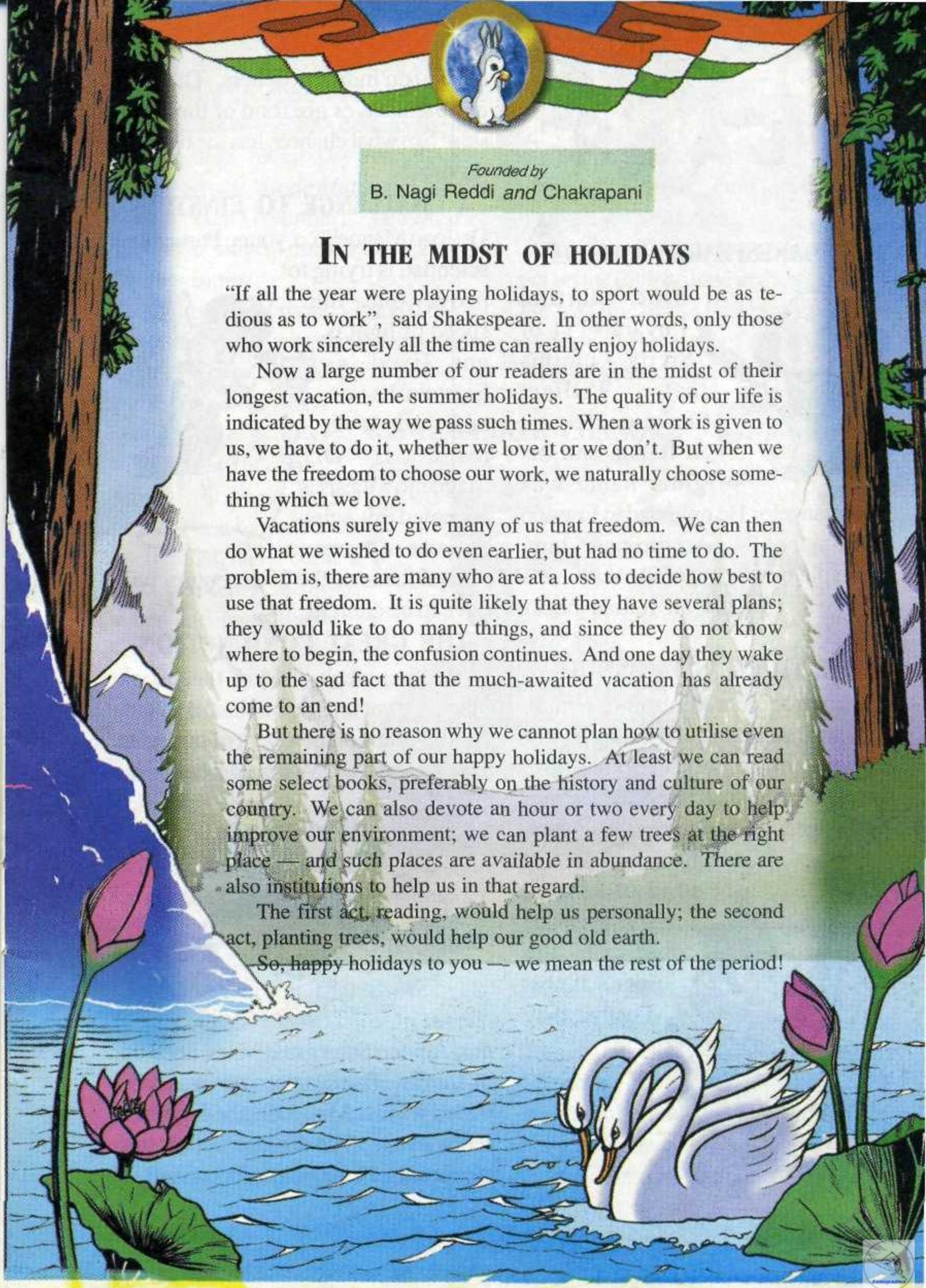
Now a large number of our readers are in the midst of their longest vacation, the summer holidays. The quality of our life is indicated by the way we pass such times. When a work is given to us, we have to do it, whether we love it or we don't. But when we have the freedom to choose our work, we naturally choose something which we love.

Vacations surely give many of us that freedom. We can then do what we wished to do even earlier, but had no time to do. The problem is, there are many who are at a loss to decide how best to use that freedom. It is quite likely that they have several plans; they would like to do many things, and since they do not know where to begin, the confusion continues. And one day they wake up to the sad fact that the much-awaited vacation has already come to an end!

But there is no reason why we cannot plan how to utilise even the remaining part of our happy holidays. At least we can read some select books, preferably on the history and culture of our country. We can also devote an hour or two every day to help improve our environment; we can plant a few trees at the right place — and such places are available in abundance. There are also institutions to help us in that regard.

The first act, reading, would help us personally; the second act, planting trees, would help our good old earth.

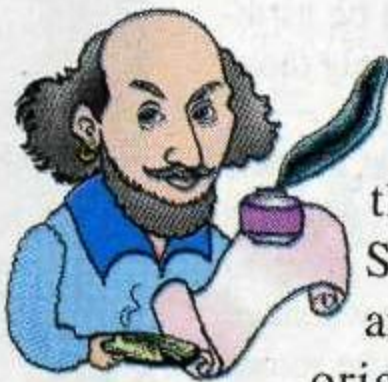
So, happy holidays to you — we mean the rest of the period!





# NEWS FLASH

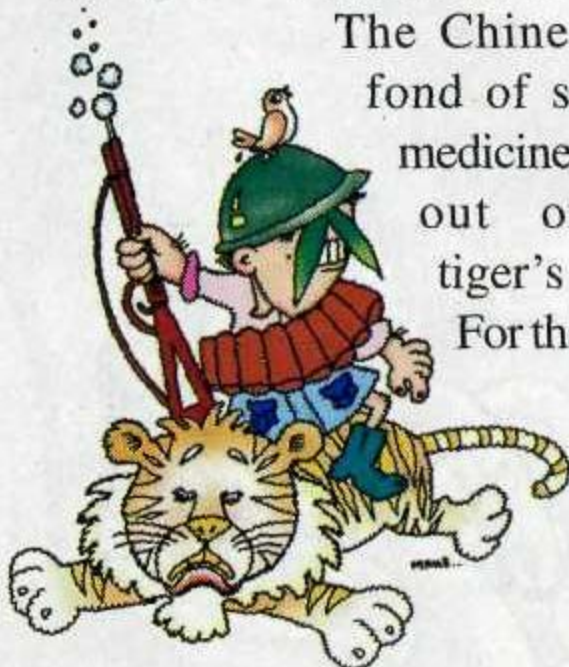
## WAS SHAKESPEARE AN ITALIAN?



Prof. Martino Luvara (71) of Sicily claims that William Shakespeare was an Italian and his original name was Michelangelo. He migrated to London at the age of 24. According to him, that explains why out of Shakespeare's 37 plays, 15 have an Italian background.

## THE TIGER IS VANISHING

The Environment Minister of Britain says that if the killing of tigers by poachers does not stop, the earth will lose one of nature's most excellent creations — the tiger — in the next 10 years.



The Chinese are fond of several medicines made out of the tiger's limbs. For that, they

depend on Indian poachers. The Indians themselves are fond of the tiger-skin! So, what chances has the tiger for survival?

## A CHALLENGE TO EINSTEIN

Dr. Joao Magueijo, a young Portuguese scientist, is trying to prove that the speed of light is not fixed as Einstein has established. It varies. If Dr. Magueijo's thesis is accepted by scientists, one of the monumental ideas of the 20th century will have to be altered!



## THE GREAT CONJUNCTION

In the first week of May, there took place a great and rare celestial event. All the original members of our solar system, the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Ve-



nus, Jupiter, Saturn and Mars, lined up in Taurus. The last time this had happened was in May 529, about fifteen centuries ago. The conjunction this year is believed to be auspicious for our earth.





The song that inspired India's struggle for freedom, particularly in the first decade of the 20th century, is well known and is revered by every Indian. It is known as *Vande Mataram*, which means "Hail O Mother!" The Mother in this context, needless to say, is Mother India.

Thousands of patriots braved the repression let loose by the British rulers of the country, shouting this powerful phrase, and so many went to the gallows singing this song which, for them, was a *mantra* or a hymn.

It must have been a rare inspiring moment when the poet Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote it. He wrote it as a part of his novel *Anand Math*. It is a highly interesting story which got its clue from an unusual rebellion against the early British rulers of India, the East India Company. It was unusual because those who launched the agitation were Sanyasis or ascetics. Bankim Chandra thought that those who fought the powerful foreign rulers must be as selfless as the ascetics. While the ascetics were devotees of Mother Kali, the freedom fighters must be devotees of Mother India. His song, *Vande Mataram*, sang the

# BORN

## THIS MONTH

glory of the motherland in a language charged with emotion.

Bankim Chandra was born in Bengal on the 28th of June in the year 1838. He was one of the first two graduates of the University of Calcutta. He worked as a magistrate and was known for his efficiency.

### RISHI BANKIM CHANDRA



But first and foremost, he was a great lover of the country.

Bankim Chandra's contribution to the development of modern Bengali prose is unique. He brought into the language a new vitality. He was at once a novelist, a poet, a journalist, and an essayist of high order. He wrote in English, too. According to some historians of Indian literature, his novel, *Rajmohun's Wife*, is the first novel in English by an Indian.

Sri Aurobindo, "The Prophet of Indian nationalism", called Bankim Chandra a Rishi or sage-poet. So, he is remembered by posterity as Rishi Bankim Chandra.

Rishi Bankim Chandra died in 1894.





*From this issue, we give a new format to our*

## **Creative Contest**

*Given below is the beginning of a story; it has all the ingredients of turning out to be an interesting tale. But that 'creation' is in YOUR hands! You have to imagine the sequences — possible and probable — and give a finish to the story. Not only finish it, but think up a catchy title (heading), too. Remember, you have to do this exercise in 100 to 200 words — not less, not more. The best entry will get an attractive prize, and the entry will also be published in the magazine. The contest is meant for our young readers. Please remember to mention your name, age, class, name of school, and home address with PIN Code. Prove that YOU can write better than grown-ups; so, don't take their help!*

*Here goes the story:*

The royal gardens of Ganganagar was always a lovely sight. It had so many fruit-bearing trees, and several flowering plants. The gardener treated each plant, each tree, as his own child and tended them with great care.

The garden abounded in monkeys, but unlike ordinary monkeys, they had a great fascination for flowers. They used to watch the gardener taking care of them. They never damaged the flower beds or plucked the flowers. Thus they became friendly with the gardener.

The need arose for the gardener to be away for one day. Who would water the

plants in his absence? he thought and thought and ultimately, he struck upon an idea. He called a few of the monkeys and told them that they should undertake the job. They agreed. They had seen the watering cans, and they knew where water was available.

The next day, the monkeys turned out in full strength and began to water the plants. Their leader supervised the exercise from a distance. But, suddenly, he had a doubt. Were the plants getting enough water? Or did some of them get a surfeit of water? How did he meet the situation?

*Come on! Take out your pen and a sheet of paper. Your entry should reach us by the 30th of June. The winning entry will be published in the August issue*


**- Editor**

### **Answers to Discovery of India Quiz (May 2000)**

1. This was the answer given by Yudhishtira to one of a series of questions put to him by Yama, the god of Death, who came in the guise of a heron on a lake.
2. (a) Sakuni was the prince of Gandhara.  
(b) Mahameru was the place where Kesari lived.  
(c) Sahadev defeated the King of Mahismati before Yudhishtira's Rajasuya Yajna.  
(d) Bharata's mother, Kaikeyi, was the daughter of the King of Kekaya.  
(e) Valmiki's hermitage was situated on the bank of the river Tamasa.







New tales of  
King Vikram  
and the Vetala!

## THE STRANGE DRINK

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the nearby forest. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the Vetala that possessed the corpse said: "O King, I am quite surprised at the patience





and stamina you demonstrate. I wonder what could be your goal. Is it to achieve some power by the virtue of which you could know who is your friend and who your foe? No doubt, it is most important for a king to be aware of the attitude of those who are around him. But there are instances of people discarding such a power when they receive it. Let me give you an example. Pay attention to my narration. That should bring you some relief."

The Vetala went on:

Long, long ago, the land of Kalyanpur was ruled by King Puranjan. He was a good and intelligent ruler. However, he had a

craze for unusual objects. He went out of the way to collect things like a rare handicraft, feathers of birds and skins of beasts which were not to be seen in that part of the world, a kind of crystal through which everything looked beautiful, so on and so forth. He spent money liberally in collecting such things.

One day, while the king was in his court, a stranger appeared before him and greeted him with a mysterious smile. He held in his hand a well-designed pot.

"Who are you? What is your business with me?" asked the king.

"My lord, have you heard of Kalasur, the fearful wizard?" asked the stranger.

"Kalasur? People say that he was the incarnation of devil. What is your relation with him?" asked the king.

"My lord, I was his disciple and my name is Garalguru. Pleased with my service to him, he taught me a secret formula. Applying that formula, I can prepare a strange drink. If one were to drink a sip of it, the person hidden within him or her will come out," said the stranger.

"What do you mean by a person hidden within a person?" queried the king.

"My lord, believe it or not, there is always a person hidden within a





person. That hidden person is the true person. Once you come to know that hidden person, you will have no illusion about the outward person. One may be extremely courteous towards you in his outward behaviour. But the moment he drinks my stuff, his real attitude towards you will become evident,” explained Garalguru.

“That is wonderful!” commented the king.

“Wonderful is the word, my lord, and it is most useful for a king. If you patronize me, I can go on preparing this drink and you can test practically everybody in your court and among your subjects,” said Garalguru.

“Can you prove the quality of your stuff?” asked the king.

“Why not!” said Garalguru. Looking in different directions, he called out to the guard at the entrance of the court and told the king, “Shall we try on this fellow?”

“All right, let us try,” agreed the king.

The surprised guard was given a sip of the strange drink. He blinked for a moment and then his eyes looked red. He goggled at the Kotwal and shouted: “You fool! You had the cheek to slap me the other day! Come on, face it!”

Before anybody could guess what



he was going to do, the guard threw his spear at the Kotwal. Luckily, the Kotwal caught hold of it before it could hit him. Meanwhile, on a hint from the king, his bodyguards jumped on the fellow and tied both hands.

“Did you slap him?” the king asked his Kotwal.

“Yes, my lord, I had. He was in charge of controlling the crowd during the temple festival. He beat up an old half-blind woman because she placed her foot on his foot. I happened to witness it and thought that he deserved to be punished,” said the Kotwal.

The king was stunned. Garalguru explained: “The guard had kept his







desire for revenge suppressed within himself. My magic drink revealed it. In this way, you can know what is there in somebody's mind so far as you are concerned."

The king arranged for Garalguru to be lodged in the royal guest-house.

In the evening, the Kotwal met the king privately and said: "My lord, I suspect, the stranger might have enacted that drama in collusion with our guard. We must try his drink on somebody else."

"I agree," said the king. He sent his chief bodyguard to the guest-house and obtained a little of the magic drink in a small container. The Kotwal carried the drink to the

temple. He saw a lone ascetic seated in a corner of the gopuram. He knelt down before him and said: "Oholy man, I have just returned from a pilgrimage. Here is a little water from the Ganga. I will feel grateful if you drink it."

The ascetic accepted the water and drank it. But the very next moment he stood up and lifted his stick and attacked the Kotwal with it. He also tried to snatch the Kotwal's gold chain. But a large group of people from a village, who had just reached there for some ceremony, came to the Kotwal's rescue. The ascetic was caught.

The king was amused at the report of the incident. "It is worth patronising Garalguru even if we have to spend a lot of money every month for the strange drink. What a miraculous way to find out the true nature of a person!" thought the king.

In the evening he narrated the day's strange experiences to the queen. The queen, too, was surprised, but she said: "I won't believe that the drink can bring out the true nature of a person unless I try it on someone I knew and trust!"

"Why don't you try?" asked the king and he obtained another quantity of the drink from Garalguru.

The queen asked her chief maid,





Suhasini, to drink it. She did so without a question. The queen stealthily followed her into the kitchen. Suhasini's sister was the chief cook. Suhasini told her: 'My sister, a year ago I was insulted by the queen because the water I had prepared for her bath was not sufficiently fragrant. I will take revenge on her. I shall mix poison in her food tonight.'

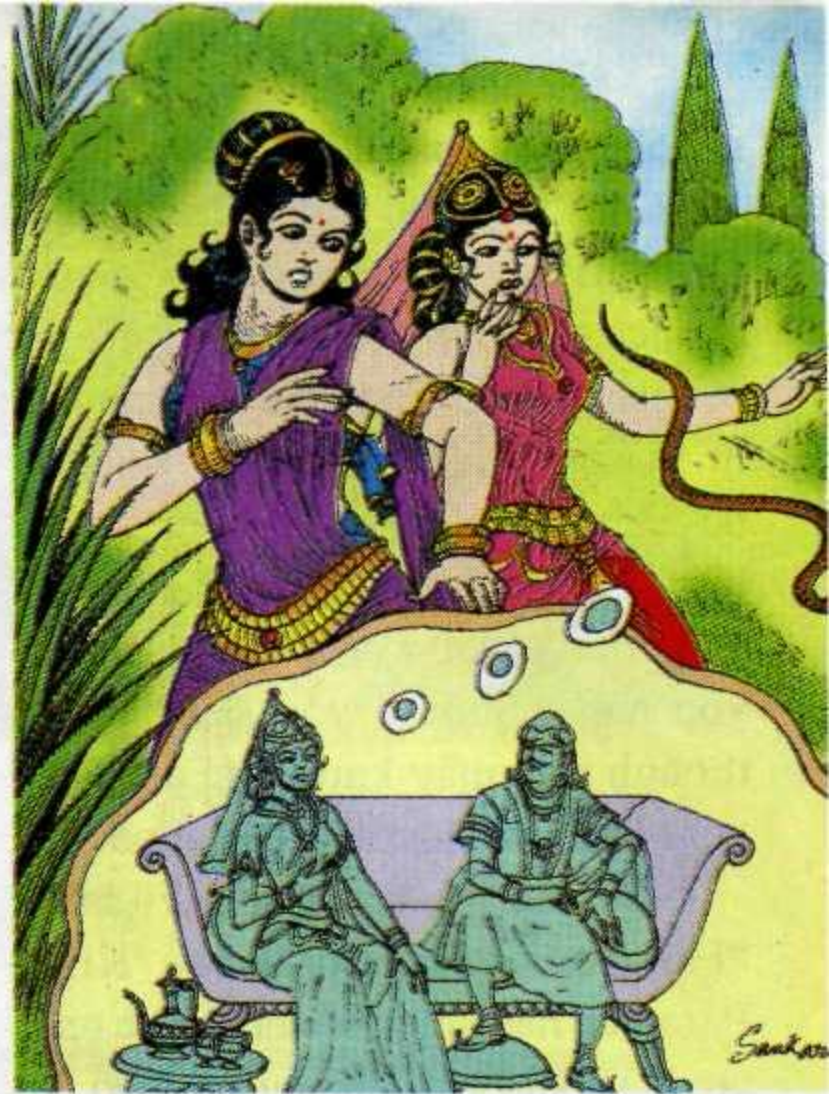
"Are you joking?" asked her sister.

"No dear, I'm quite serious," asserted Suhasini.

The proposal sounded so grotesque to the cook that she almost fainted.

The queen quietly returned to the king and said: "Suhasini and her sister Sumitra are my dearest companions. I have never known more faithful and more sweet persons than them. You remember how Suhasini saved my life only last week. Inside the garden a cobra was hanging over my head from a branch and it was about to bite me when she rushed and caught it by hand and hurled it away. She knowingly risked her life to save me. How can she ever think of poisoning me? There is some other mystery in the strange change that is coming over those who drink the water."

The king stood in silence, his



eyes closed. He suddenly went near a bell and rang it thrice. A dozen bodyguards and palace officials came running. "Go to the guest-house and capture Garalguru and throw him into a dungeon immediately," ordered the king.

In the morning, he sent a request to a great yogi who lived in the forest. The yogi came and met individually all the three persons who had taken the strange drink and treated them with some *mantras*. They all became normal and they did not remember what they had done or said.

The vetala ended his story and in



a challenging tone, demanded of King Vikram: "How did King Puranjan act so foolishly? He had got a rare chance to know the inner nature of people. But instead of rewarding the man who gave his power to him through his strange drink, he punished him! How could he be so ungrateful and cruel? Answer me, O King, if you can. Should you keep mum though you may know the answer, your head would roll off your neck."

Forthwith answered King Vikram: "Far from acting foolishly, King Puranjan had acted wisely. The real credit should go to the queen who, in her wisdom, hinted at the real nature of the magic drink. The drink did not bring out the inner nature of any person. What it did was to impose on the person some wrong and hostile force. We should not forget that Garalguru was the disciple of Kalasur who, even according to the king, was

a devilish person. Such persons do not wish for anybody's welfare. Their perverted satisfaction depends on damaging others' nature or degrading others' characters. Whoever drank the magic drink was possessed by an evil power and thought and acted in an evil way. Over the years, the king would have spoilt everybody around him, suspecting everybody. It is quite possible that Garalguru had been planted by some other king who planned to create confusion at Kalyanpur and then invade it. It is also possible that Garalguru himself had the ambition to usurp the kingdom, after making all the friends of the king villains. It was wise of the king to call the Yogi and exorcise the victims of the strange drink."

No sooner had King Vikram concluded his answer than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.







## THE GOLDEN THRONE

*[The story so far: Sridatta, the King of Kaundinya, was worried because his kingdom was to be invaded jointly by three neighbouring kingdoms. However, his son, Vijayadatta, was a brave and intelligent prince who gave him courage. Srilekha, the daughter of one of the would be invaders, King Madhavasena of Kalindi, escaped to Kaundinya and married Vijayadatta. As a result, Madhavasena decided not to side with the invaders.]*

*During such days of tension, following a prophecy, a ground close to the palace at Kaundinya was dug and a golden throne was discovered. Prince Vijayadatta and Princess Srilekha were to ascend it. But as the couple prepared to do so, one of the six images of damsels flanking the steps said she would narrate a story which would end in a riddle and the prince could climb the first step only if he could solve the riddle. The image then started telling the story of a king of Tripurantaka named Kalaketu. He and his officials were idle and wicked and, as a result, his subjects had no end to their suffering. A mysterious masked man began punishing the exploiters and looting their treasury.]*

Soon interesting stories about the mysterious bandit began to circulate among the people. His name was Chitrarath — after a widely revered deity. It was believed that he had the deity's blessings.

Sometimes the bandit would stop his horse in front of commuting scholars

and engage them in a debate on ethics and philosophy. This showed that he was not only highly courageous, but a person of deep knowledge.

It was commonly known that he plundered the wealth of misers, exploiters, and even of the king only to dis-





tribute it among the needy. He also punished those officials and flatterers of the king who were merciless towards the helpless folks. The corrupt courtiers, officials, and their henchmen tried their best to capture the young man, but in vain.

It was an auspicious day when Queen Haimavati visited a temple in the capital. As she was returning to the palace, her attention was drawn by the sight of a holy man.

The holy man began to recite a poem. Its theme was: *the jasmine flower, despite the creeper having to wind itself around thorny bushes, gives out its fragrance*. The holy man probably wished to convey that the queen was like a jasmine flower though she was living in a palace filled with

vile people.

The queen heard the holy man's recitation with reverence and bowed to him again before returning to the palace.

What the holy man or the queen did not remember was, reciting poetry had been forbidden because some of the poets had been critical of the king. A spy reported the matter to King Kalaketu. The cruel king immediately threw the queen into prison and ordered for the holy man to suffer a hundred lashes of whip, standing under an awfully hot sun at noon.

The queen wept, not for her own fate, but for the holy man. The holy man had fainted under the torture.

Srimalla, the commander of the army, was a worried man. He wished he could meet Chitrarath and with his help topple the king. But that was not possible. So, he did the next best thing. He sent a secret message to the ruler of neighbouring kingdom, Chandanverma: "My lord, I know that you are a just and great king. Normally no citizen should invite the king of another kingdom to take over his own kingdom. I should have dethroned our king myself, but I'm too old to do that. In this circumstance, I request you to come to the rescue of our suffering people."

Chandanverma was well aware of the situation in Tripurantaka. But as he was not a greedy king, he had not tried





to annex the neighbouring kingdom. He now decided to act. His large and disciplined army descended on Tripurantaka and almost marched over it without any resistance.

King Kalaketu was taken prisoner. He was allowed to live in a modest house outside the capital, along with his queens. He was given a good garden to look after!

"The foolish king Kalaketu has received less than what is due to him. Now I must find out that audacious young man, Chitrarath. He should receive what is due to him," announced Chandanverma. His soldiers spread out in all directions looking for the mysterious young man. But they could not locate him. Only one thing became more and more obvious. The young man was so dear to the people that they would not reveal his whereabouts.

King Chandanverma's spies, however, could find out that Chitrarath was bed-ridden after being wounded by the king's soldiers. "The young man must be under some physician's treatment," said Srimalla. All the physicians in the kingdom were questioned. But no clue was found.

One evening, one of the court officials, Anantha, met the king and said in confidence: "I know where Chitrarath is. He's in a small village at the foot of a hill. The villagers are tight-lipped about him. A well-known physician



visits the young man every night. I found this out by stealthily following the physician. If you also do so, Chitrarath can be nabbed."

The king himself led a group of trained armymen and they accompanied Anantha. The young man was found in a hut.

But the king showed no anger towards him. He arranged to shift him to the royal guest-house adjacent to the palace. The king's personal physicians were appointed to treat Chitrarath. And the young man recovered in a week.

Chandanverma called an assembly of the newly appointed nobles and officers and crowned Chitrarath as his successor. At the same time, he or-







dered that as the young man had acted like a bandit, he should subject himself to some punishment. He should sweep the main temple of the capital every day.

Thereafter King Chandanaverma pronounced the most astounding judgement: The court official Anantha was to be publicly flogged along with a hundred officers, courtiers, and influential people of the old regime who all had been proved to be corrupt!

Narrating this story, the spirit of the image addressed Vijayadatta and asked: "How come Anantha was punished along with all the other corrupt people? Was he not the only person to help Chandanaverma find Chitrarath? What was his crime? You may climb the first step of this great throne only if

you can answer this question to my satisfaction. If you cannot, the throne will vanish at once!"

Said Prince Vijayadatta: "A wise king judges a person not according to his action, but according to the motive behind his action. King Chandanaverma was wise. He knew that Chitrarath's only motive was to help the miserable and the exploited. Chitrarath risked his life and was wounded only because he was unable to bear the sorrows and suffering of the people. While his capacity and love for the people made him eligible to become a ruler, his action as a bandit deserved to be punished. The wise Chandanaverma had to decide on a mode of punishment which would befit a king. Wisely he decided that Chitrarath should sweep the temple floor. In the guise of awarding punishment, he gave Chitrarath an opportunity to visit the temple every day and to serve the deity with humility. There is hardly any virtue greater than humility.

"Now, so far as the court official was concerned, his motive in helping the king to catch Chitrarath was not any love for the people or the king. Anantha was one of those who wished that Chitrarath was caught so that he could be punished, and not crowned as the future king. He was under the impression that King Chandansen was also looking for Chitrarath in order to pun-





ish him. That is to say, Anantha was in collusion with the corrupt ones who exploited the people. That is why he deserved punishment."

The spirit of the image spoke out in a warm and appreciative voice: "Prince Vijayadatta! You're indeed wise. You're welcome to climb the first step."

The court hall of the palace resounded with thunderous applause by all those who had assembled there to witness the coronation. Amidst traditional music and chanting of hymns, Vijayadatta climbed the first step of the golden throne.

\* \* \* \* \*

While tumultuous celebrations marked the atmosphere of Kaundinya, at Kalindi, Princess Srilekha's mother was in a state of bliss as her husband's spies had informed her about the golden throne on which Prince Vijayadatta and Princess Srilekha were to be crowned.

But her husband, King Madhavasena, was feeling restless.

Outwardly, he was still in league with the wicked Maralabhupati, the King of Champaka, who was planning an assault on Kaundinya.

"Maralabhupati plans to launch the attack on Kaundinya tonight," Madhavasena told his wife.

"Don't you worry. Providence will turn the tide of events in Vijayadatta's favour. I had had a dream which indicated that. It'll be good if you send another message of goodwill by a pigeon to Kaundinya," suggested the queen.

King Madhavasena nodded and went out to act according to the queen's suggestion.

As the applause and music subsided, the spirit of the second image on the next higher step told Vijayadatta: "O Prince, my sister Satyashakti has already told you my name. I'm Dharmashakti. Here's my story, meant for you. Please listen with care."

*(To continue)*







## BUNTU SURVIVES POISON

Buntu was an orphan. He was very helpful to people in difficulty, but always played pranks with those who tried to take advantage of his goodness. While some people thought that he was quite clever, some others took him to be a fool.

Buntu worked with different households and earned just enough to maintain himself. He had only few needs and had no desire for any comfort.

Near his village lived a landlord named Rajul Shah. He owned an estate some five miles away. About a hundred families lived in his estate

as his subjects and paid him tax. Rajul Shah visited his estate from time to time. It was customary for his subjects to entertain him with choice food whenever he went to the house of any one of them.

“Buntu, I want somebody to accompany me to my estate. My servants are busy. Will you go with me, holding the umbrella above my head?” Rajul Shah asked Buntu. “People consider it a blessing to be in my company,” he added.

“I, too, would like to feel blessed, sir, but I’m hungry. Let me eat at your home and then I’ll set out with you,”





said Buntu.

Rajul Shah laughed. "You'll get much better food once we reach our estate. Just tell your tummy to wait for an hour or so," he said.

Buntu did not murmur any more. He walked along-side the landlord, holding an umbrella above his head.

At the estate the landlord had to remain busy deciding a dispute between two farmers over a piece of land. Since he did not go to anyone's house, nobody offered him any food. Hours passed. By the time the dispute was settled, it was noon. Poor Buntu was almost dying with hunger and thirst, but he had no other go than wait under a banyan tree.

"I must hurry back home as I'm expecting an important guest," the landlord told his people.

"In that case, sir, please carry these with you, since you won't have any time to eat or drink them here," said the two farmers. One of them had brought roasted chicken and the other some fruit juice.

Just then a problem regarding another land was brought to his notice and one of the complainants invited him for lunch. The landlord was sure



that the lunch would be sumptuous. So, he decided to stay on.

He had the roasted chicken packed in an earthen pot and covered with a piece of cloth. He then called Buntu and said: "My boy, take this home to my wife and tell her that I'll be late. Now, don't open it on the way, for there's a bird inside which will fly away the moment it gets a chance. And, don't open this mug either. It contains deadly poison. The mere smell of it could kill you. Do you





understand?"

"Oh yes," replied Buntu and started on his return journey.

The landlord ate his lunch, took a rest for a while, and then began walking back home. As he had a good lunch, he now dreamed of a sumptuous dinner consisting of the chicken and the delicious fruit juice awaiting him at home.

Midway there was a lake. The landlord saw someone lying asleep under a tree, enjoying the cool breeze.

But the fellow looked familiar, didn't he? The landlord went closer. The fellow asleep was none other than Buntu. Beside him lay the earthen pot and the mug — both empty.

The landlord shook him awake,

and he sat up and looked absolutely surprised.

"What's the matter with you?" asked the angry landlord.

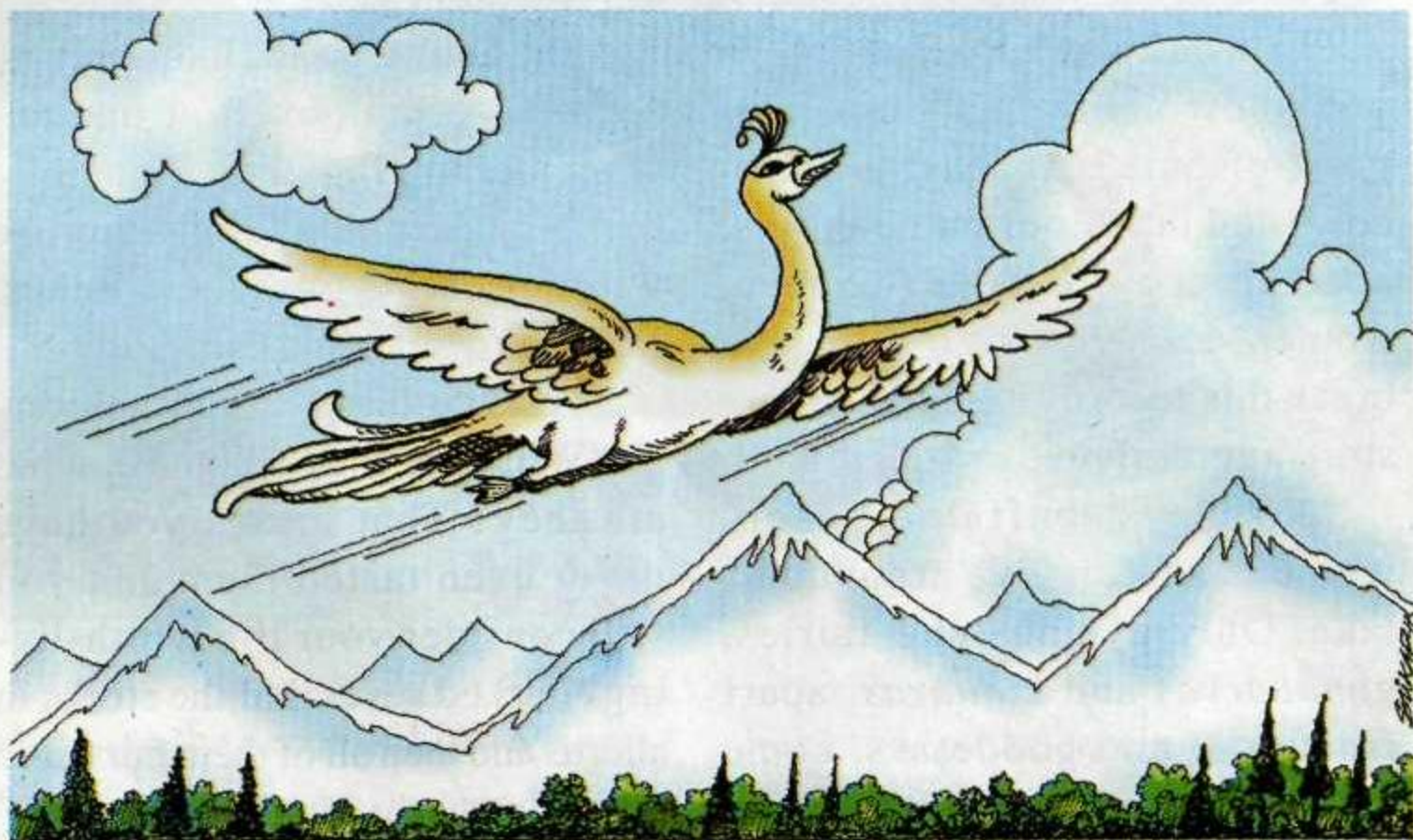
"Matter with me, sir? Am I still alive?"

"What do you mean?" demanded the landlord.

"Sir, a sudden gust of wind tore away the cover of the pot and, as you had rightly feared, the bird flew away at once. I was heart-broken. How to show my face to you? I decided to put an end to my life. So I drank up the poison the mug contained and lay down, sure to die in a moment. But now I realise what a blessing it was to be in your company. I survived the deadly poison!" Buntu bowed to a speechless Rajul Shah.







### THE SWAN FROM MANASAROVAR

A luminous swan, a resident of the great and sacred lake Manasarovar high in the Himalayas, once grew curious about the localities beyond that divine range of hills.

One day, he spread his silver wings and rose above the peaks and flew down towards the villages and hamlets of the plains.

He flew for hours and then, on seeing a pond at the centre of a village, descended there.

As he relaxed touching the muddy water and surveying the environment with curiosity, the

storks who were wallowing in the mud scanned him with amazement.

"Who are you, stranger?" one of the older storks asked him.

"I am a swan."

"Swan? We understand. We have heard of swans. Where do you live?"

"The heavenly Manasarovar is my abode."

"Where is that?"

"In the inner ranges of the god-souled Himalayas, overlooked by Mount Kailash."

"Is that lake different from this our pond in any way?" asked an-





other stork.

"Well, very, very different, I must say!"

"In what way? How much do you know about this wonderful pond of ours? At least a dozen cows and buffaloes bathe in this, apart from a dozen or two men, women, and kids. Can your lake break this record?" asked a young stork aggressive.

"No cows, buffaloes, men, women and kids live around our lake. Only nymphs and fairies, *gundharvas* and *kinnaras*, apart from gods and goddesses, come to bathe there," replied the swan.

"Do you have such water-creepers as we have — sporting such tiny flowers?"

"No. But we have lotuses ra-

diating a golden hue."

"What do you eat?"

"The lotus-fruit and lotus-nectar."

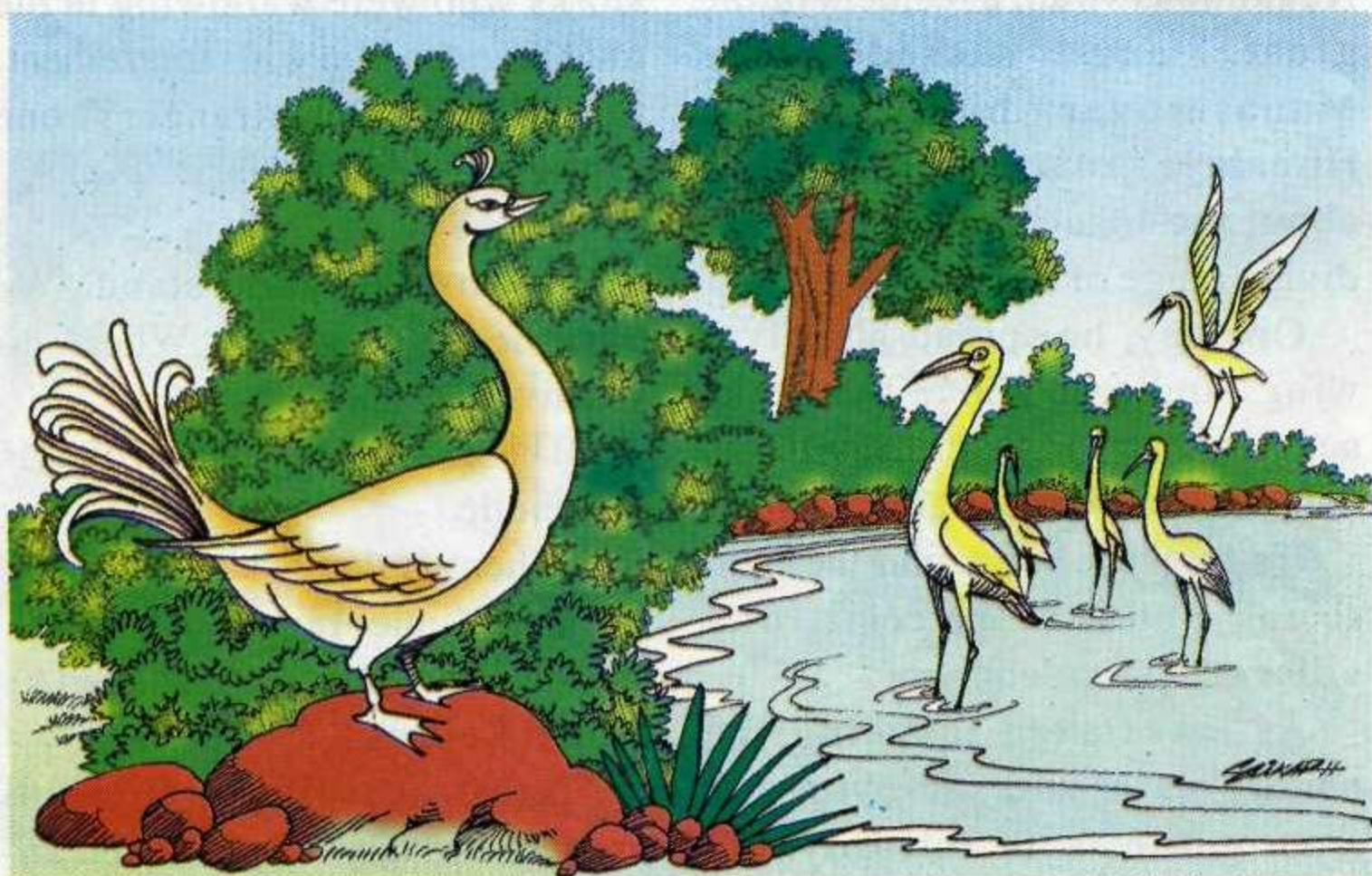
The storks looked at one another meaningfully.

"Do you mean to say that you live without eating insects, leeches, froglings, worms and fish?"

"What are they?" asked the swan.

"What are they? You ask what are they? That means you have never even tasted them and you still consider your life worth-living?" asked several of the storks in chorus and then all of them burst into a shrill, screechy laughter.

The swan from the Manasarovar took off and spread his wings heading towards his Himalayan abode.







Many are the deeds of Lord Vishnu, the Divine Being who sustains the Creation.

Says the Puranic legend : In the Ocean of Milk there rises a great mountain. It is known as Trikut, because it has three peaks – of iron, silver, and gold. Amidst the peaks were a valley teeming with trees and a lake.

In the forest lived a horde of elephants. Their leader, Gajendra, was a mighty and charming elephant.

One day, Gajendra descended into the lake to quench his thirst. After drinking the cool water to his heart's fill, he began playing in the water. Some members of his horde joined him. They frolicked and trumpeted joyously for long, but suddenly

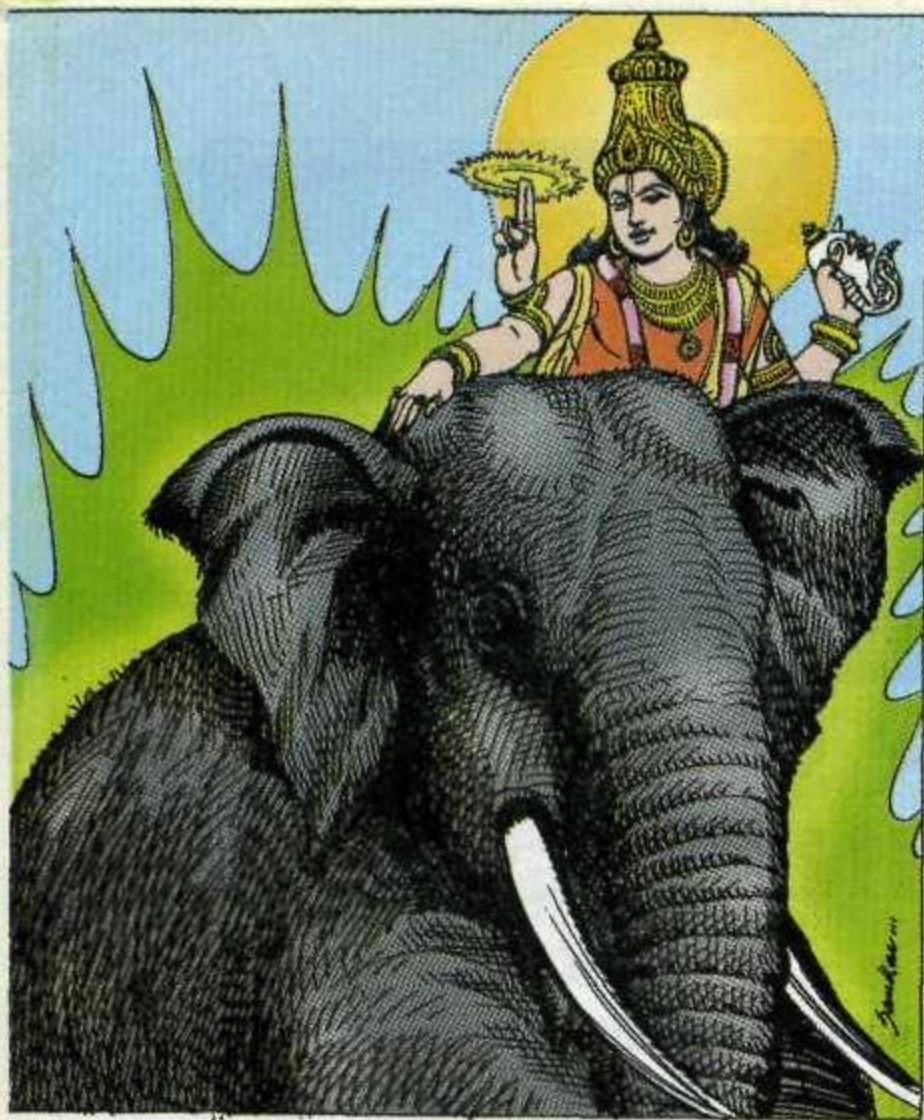
a huge crocodile, coming stealthily near Gajendra, caught hold of one of his legs by his powerful jaws.

Gajendra ordered the other elephants to get out of the water, because he feared they could be attacked by other crocodiles. Gajendra tried his best to scare the crocodile away by piercing its scaly body with his tusks, but the crafty crocodile continued to change its position swiftly thereby avoiding the elephant's attack. Sometimes the elephant hit the crocodile with its trunk, but the crocodile with its powerful tail, warded off the attack.

Once in a while, when the elephant succeeded in placing one of his feet

## 1. GRACE COMES TO THE DEVOTEE'S RESCUE





on the crocodile's back and pressing it, the crocodile sank into the mud and slipped away. Feeling relieved, the elephant would head for the land; but the next moment the crocodile caught hold of his leg again.

As there was no sign of their fight coming to an end, those elephants who stood on the bank dispersed, shedding tears over their leader's plight. Days rolled by and a thousand years passed with no sign of the fight coming to an end.

Since the lake was the natural abode of the crocodile and the elephant was a creature of the land, it

proved to be an unequal fight. By and by, the elephant lost its strength. The crocodile was deriving more and more vitality by drinking the blood oozing from the elephant's leg.

After a long time Gajendra realised that to get rid of his adversary was a vain hope. He had no longer any strength even to stand erect. He could collapse any moment. Alas, he felt that his end was not far. He lamented his fate and cursed himself for having tarried in the lake after quenching his thirst.

Suddenly, it struck him that there must be some power, somewhere, to come to the rescue of the helpless. His inner spirit now cried for help from that power. He remembered Vishnu, the Divine Protector of all. He ardently prayed to Him for help. His pride on account of his own strength and position had vanished. Out of an utter sense of helplessness, there surged from within him an ardent prayer: "O Lord, Thou alone can save me. Kindly intervene!"

Instantly, he felt his pain disappearing and a serene peace spreading within his heart.

Raising his trunk and his eyes upward, Gajendra tried to locate the





source from which came this new feeling into him. What he saw at once stunned and delighted him. The enchanting figure of Lord Vishnu appeared before him, as if covering the entire blue sky. Next moment, he saw a whirling round object, luminous and speedy as lightning, coming down.

It struck the crocodile's head and cut it off. What a relief for Gajendra! Tears streaming from his eyes, he bowed to the Lord. He understood that it was Vishnu's weapon, the Sudarshana Chakra, which rescued him from his terrible foe.

The crocodile, while dying, instantly remembered his life before he was born as a crocodile. He had been a supernatural being, a gundharva, named Huhoo. He was quite irreverent and discourteous towards others. He was in the habit of assuming different forms and teasing or harassing people. Being a gundharva, he could get away with his mischief because ordinary human beings had no power over him.

Once he had the audacity to swim under the surface of a river and catch hold of the leg of a sage named Devala. Now the sage possessed supernatural powers more than that of



a gundharva. He cursed Huhoo, saying, "Become a real crocodile!"

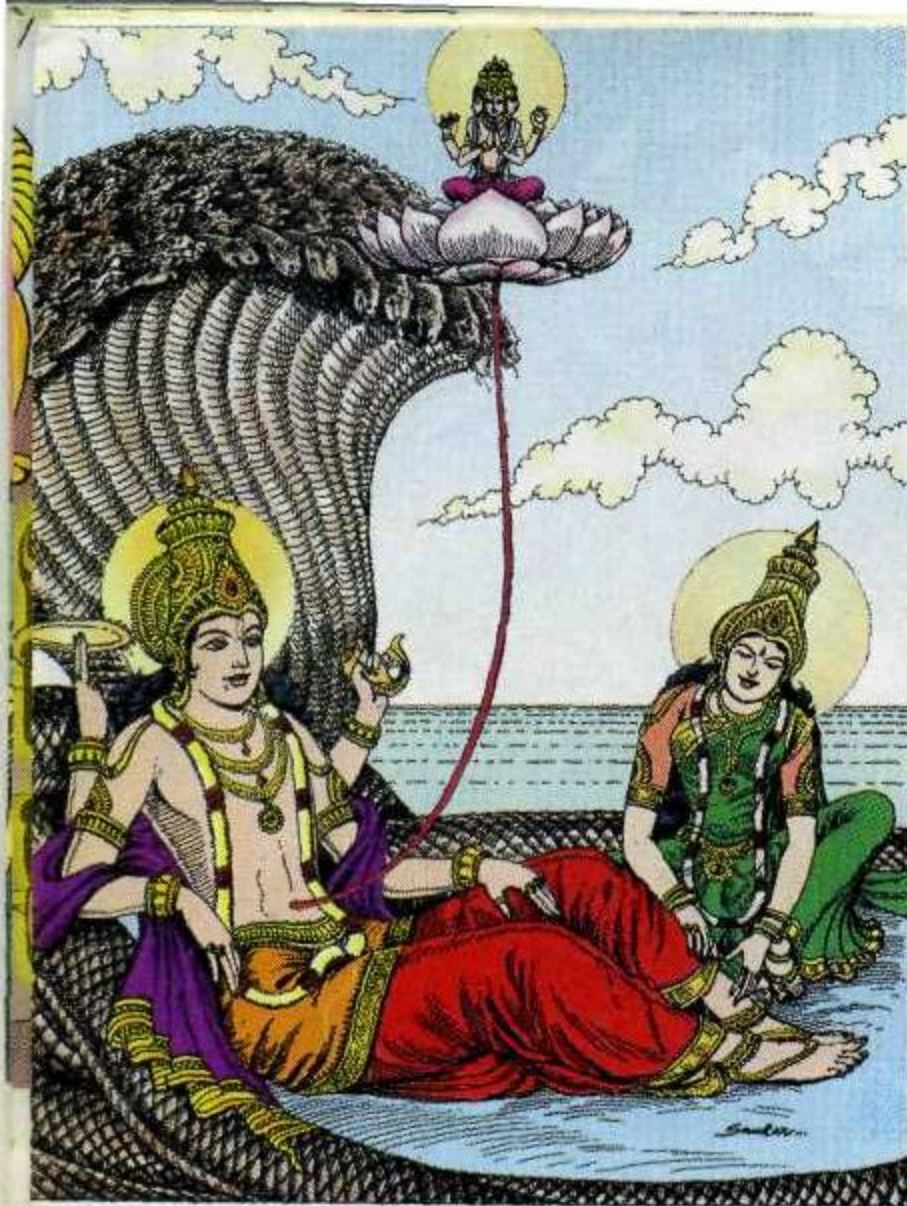
Huhoo thus became a crocodile. At last, Vishnu's Chakra released him from the curse and he became once again the gundharva he was.

Vishnu patted Gajendra on the back. He got back all his lost vitality. He, too, remembered his earlier life – as King Indradyumna. Once, because he was discourteous to sage Agastya, his curse obliged him to take birth as an elephant.

The story of Gajendra and the crocodile was narrated by Sage Suta to Saunaka and other sages in the Naimisha forest where they had gath-







ered for participating in a yajna.

“O Suta, the story reveals the great truth that whoever takes refuge in the Lord sincerely, the Lord comes to his rescue. Gajendra is the example and assurance for all human beings – all those who grow devoted to the Lord,” said the sages.

“Indeed, you are right. What I told you is one of the roles the Divine’s Grace plays in our lives. There is much more to it. The Divine descends again and again as Avatars into the human race. He does so in order to develop the

play of consciousness upon the earth,” said Suta.

“O noble sage, wouldn’t you kindly tell us more about Lord Vishnu?” the sages asked imploringly.

“The great rishi, Vyasa, had narrated many of Sri Vishnu’s deeds in the *Bhagavatam*. His son, Shukadev, learnt the sacred saga and recited it before King Parikshit,” said Suta and, on the repeated appeals made by the sages, narrated several incidents from the *Bhagavatam* for their satisfaction.

Amidst the Ocean of Milk, on the great serpent Sheshnag reclines Sri Vishnu, shining a brilliant blue. The thousand hoods of the mighty serpent serves like a roof over him. From the navel of Vishnu coils up a wondrous stem culminating in a lotus. Out of this lotus emerges Brahma who creates the universe.

The eternal time passes, divided into Yugas, four in number. They are Krita or Satya yuga, Treta yuga, Dwapara yuga and Kali yuga. The four yugas make a Mahayug. A thousand mahayugs amount to





a Kalpa, which is one day for Brahma. As one Kalpa draws to a close, Brahma falls asleep. That is known as Kalpanta, the end of a Kalpa. The universe is plunged into dense darkness, after everything is consumed by a strange fire, the Sankarshana Agni, emanating from Vishnu. A terrible cyclone marks the atmosphere. The tumultuous ocean touches the sky and nothing is visible but the turbulent water. The deluge continues for the duration of Brahma's sleep through the night.

Once, when the end of a Kalpa was approaching, Satyavrata, a great devotee of Vishnu, found a golden fish in his palms as he rose after a dip in the river, his palms folded in the way of paying obeisance to Vishnu.

"O noble soul, I'm afraid of the bigger fish who could swallow me any moment. I seek your protection," said the little fish.

Satyavrata placed the fish in his Kamandalu and carried it to his hermitage. But the fish had grown so big by the next day that he had to shift it to a pond. But the pond proved too small a home for it in the next few days and it had to be transferred to a lake. His growth, however, was incredibly rapid. It had to be guided into the sea.

"O noble soul! Is the sea safe for me? Aren't there huge creatures to harm me?" asked the fish.

"You're growing so fast that I can't think of any other shelter for you! But, be sure, you're too big for any monster in the sea to swallow you!" said Satyavrata.

**(To continue)**







## GOLD APLENTY

In the city of Malyapur lived Ramdas, an honest man. He was happily married and had two sons.

When, to his great dismay, his wife died of a sudden illness, Ramdas was faced with a problem. Who would look after the little boys? He decided to leave them with their maternal uncle who was living in a faraway village.

Before he set out with the boys, Ramdas took his wife's precious ornaments and all his money to his rich neighbour, Shaitansingh. "Brother, this is all I have for my sons' use in future. Please keep it safe," he said to his neighbour.

"Don't worry," Shaitansingh assured him, "your property will be as safe with me as the sun in the sky."

But Shaitansingh was as greedy as he was rich. When Ramdas returned to Malyapur after a few months and asked for the ornaments and money, Shaitansingh handed over to him a box of fake ornaments and counterfeit

coins. Ramdas soon found out how terribly cheated he had been. He went back to his sons, told them of Shaitansingh's treachery, and soon died a heart-broken man.

Years passed. The sons of Ramdas grew up as two bright young men. They took to trading in gold, and soon grew rich. But they never forgot Shaitansingh's wickedness. One day, they set out for their native town, Malyapur.

The elder brother had now grown long hair and a beard. Donning the dress of a mendicant, he went over to a deserted temple next to the river that flowed by Malyapur.

The younger brother dressed himself up as a prince. With a retinue of servants, he went to live in a rented house opposite Shaitansingh's mansion.

The 'prince' lived luxuriously and gave alms generously. Before long he attracted Shaitansingh's attention.

"This young man is spending money





as sportively as a farmer scatters seeds on his field. He hands a beggar a rupee when a single paisa would have been enough. Every evening musicians sing before him for handsome rewards. What a pity money that ought to be locked up in iron chests is being thrown away at beggars and singers!’ thought Shaitansingh.

He called on the prince and began to flatter him. The prince showed much respect for him. They became friends.

“Thief, thief!” the prince shouted one night. The neighbours came running to his house. The young man told them that some burglars had entered his bedroom. They were about to take away his caskets – full of gold – when he woke up and raised the cry. The burglars escaped.

Shaitansingh did not allow this opportunity to slip by. He waited until all the other neighbours had left, and then said: “Prince, it is not wise for you to live in this unsafe house. I’m your friend and my house is like a castle. Why don’t you come and live with me as my honoured guest? Your wealth will be safe in my house.”

The prince thanked him and accepted the proposal. A dozen caskets, supposedly laden with gold, were carried to Shaitansingh’s house. The prince was shown into a big room. He heaved a sigh of relief to see his valuable caskets lined up near his bed.

Shaitansingh’s joy was tremendous at the sight of his guest’s



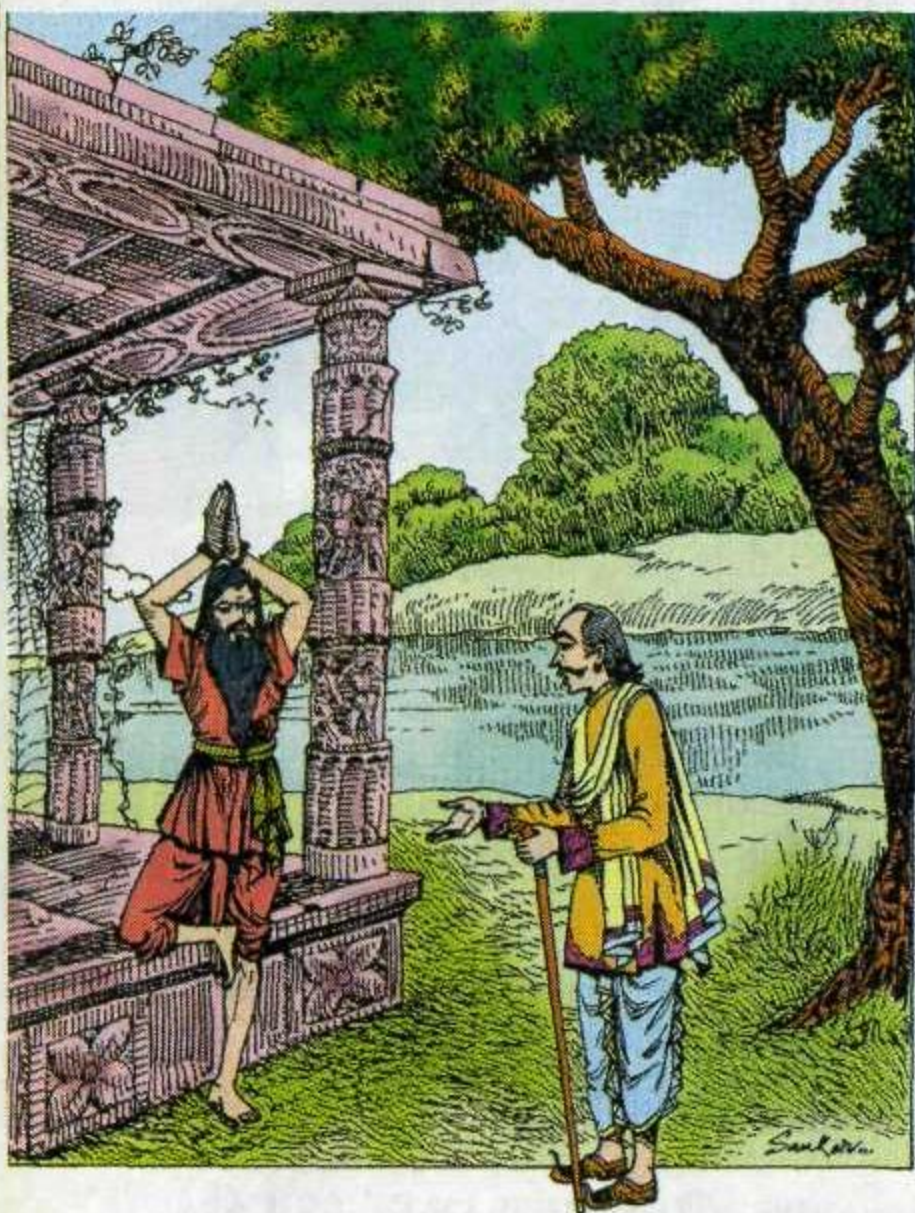
wealth. It only heightened his eagerness to own it. In his mind he spun one plan after another to achieve his end. He hardly slept a wink.

One day, the prince’s servants said that their master had fallen ill and he was not eating any food. At least this was the impression his host was given. The illness seemed to linger on.

One morning the prince called Shaitansingh to his bedside and mumbled out, “My days are numbered. In my dream I was asked to make a gift of all my wealth to a certain mendicant. He lives in a deserted temple on the river-bank. My noble host, will you kindly go to him and beg







him to come here?"

Shaitansingh had already heard much about the mendicant. That he stood on one leg for a long time in the morning and did the same thing in the evening. Who wouldn't be impressed by such feats? Besides, he was indifferent to worldly things. He distributed to the poor all the offerings he received from his admirers.

Shaitansingh hurried to the mendicant. With a great show of humility, he requested the holy man to come and meet the dying prince.

"I don't mind fulfilling the last wish of a dying man. But, the problem is, I hardly know the value of gold. Besides,

can this lonely temple be a suitable place for storing gold?"

"Don't you worry," Shaitansingh hastened to say, "I know – rather, know very well – the value of gold. I will undertake to sell them on your behalf should the need arise. So far as their safety is concerned, I'm ready to keep them in my house. And I should feel honoured if you, too, are pleased to come and stay with me!"

Shaitansingh made the request feigning love and devotion. What could the compassionate mendicant do but agree to the proposal? He duly arrived at Shaitansingh's house. After showing some reluctance, he accepted the wealth from the dying prince and blessed him.

But lo and behold! Such was the power of the mendicant's blessing that instead of wasting away, the prince recovered miraculously. Along with the mendicant, he showed a fondness for eating all the best things in the world — at Shaitansingh's expense, of course!

Days passed. The prince at last prepared to return to his kingdom. He requested the mendicant to accompany him. The mendicant was willing to oblige, but how could he go away before disposing of all his gold?

Shaitansingh seemed too ready to come to his help.

"Since you're in a hurry, I can spare you the botheration of going to the bazaar and bargaining with the merchants. I can buy it up. The noble





soul that you are, I don't mind paying you a price higher than what you can get in the market."

"How kind of you!" said the mendicant.

Shaitansingh's joy knew no bounds. He paid to the mendicant one-tenth the price of the gold in the caskets. Even then he had to pay such a large sum of money that he was left without a single coin.

An hour after the prince and the mendicant had taken leave of him, Shaitansingh carried a piece of his newly-acquired gold to a goldsmith.

"You call this gold? Ha, ha! Gold? Ha, ha, ha! Next you will call a fly an eagle!" the goldsmith guffawed.

Shaitansingh soon learnt to his great shock that what he had purchased for a large sum of money was hardly worth a pouchful of coins!

He ran to the king and wailed before him, narrating how he had been duped. The king at once ordered his officer to look for the two strangers. Both were still in the city. They came to the king's court most willingly.

The trial began.

"I did not sell my gold to anybody. I made a gift of it to the mendicant and was cured by his blessing. Since then the gold has been his. I've nothing to do with it," declared the prince. The king found his statement cogent enough.

"I had warned Shaitansingh that to me gold was no different from stone. I had no knowledge of its value. It is Shaitansingh who proposed to buy them. It is he who fixed the price. I distributed the money he gave me among the poor," said the mendicant. The king found his statement cogent enough, too!

"Shaitansingh! I'm sorry for you, but this is a strange situation. The prince cannot be held responsible for what he had already given away. The mendicant cannot be held responsible either. It is you who volunteered to buy his metal. You fixed the price. You should have made sure that what you were buying was gold!" said the king.

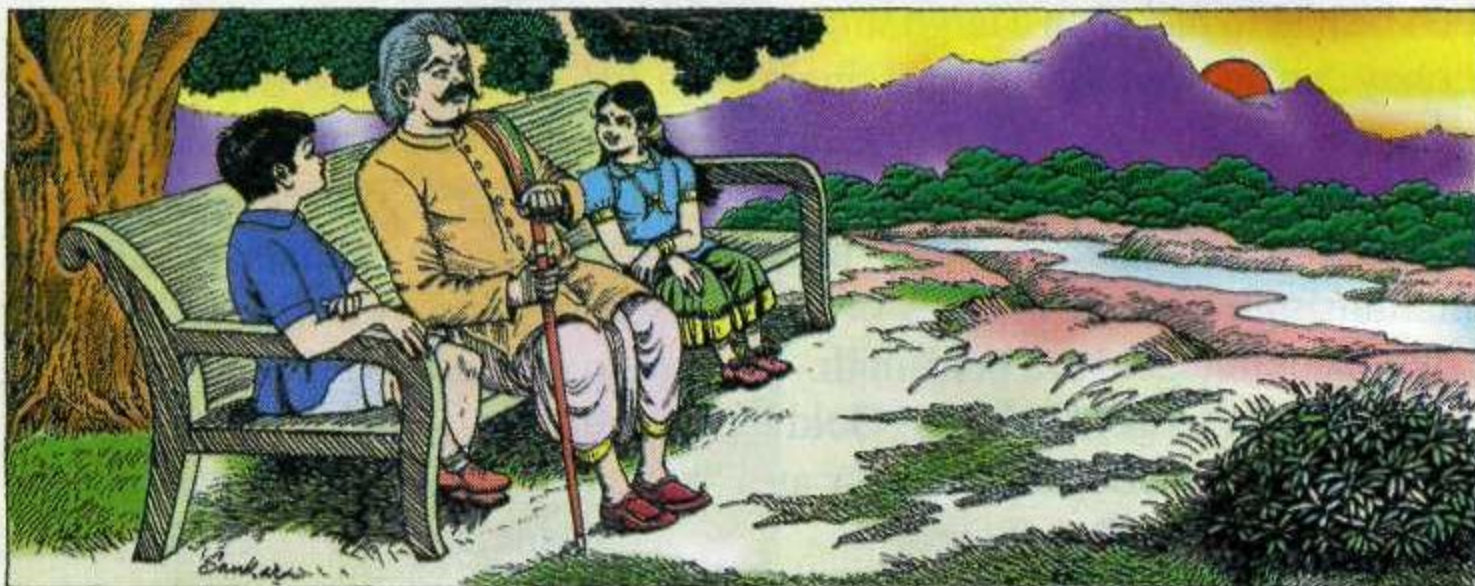
The two strangers thanked the king and returned home.





*Glimpses of a great civilisation –  
its glorious quest for Truth through the ages.*

## 6. A GREAT FOREST WITH A CIVILIZATION



“Grandpa, the list of old names of Indian places you gave us was fascinating. It brings to our memory so many wonderful people of ages gone by,” said Chameli lovingly, as she and Sandip flanked Professor Devnath while enjoying their evening walk along the river-bank.

“Behind such names can be traced not only great people, but also great deeds. Am I right, Grandpa?” asked Sandip.

The professor sat down on a cement bench and fixed his eyes on the sun setting behind a dusky line of hills and trees miles away beyond the river.

“Well, my child, our past is vast and quite complex. It’s not that the

place-names always bear the memory of great people and great deeds. It’s difficult for us to read the minds and attitudes of men and women belonging to a distant past. All I know is, out of their compassion, the Rishis had named some places even after the names of men who were neither noble nor brave, if something unusual happened around them. Probably the Rishis feared that that unusual incident would be forgotten by posterity if the central figure involved was not given a long life,” said Grandpa.

“What if the incident was forgotten? Should an unworthy name be immortalised for the sake of an incident?” demanded Sandip.

“My boy, in such cases, the inci-





dent is so important that it should be remembered, even if, for that matter, an unworthy person, too, must be remembered. Kamsa must be remembered if Krishna is to be remembered. In fact, the so-called unworthy person could be inseparable from the message the legend behind the name carries," observed Grandpa.

"For example?" asked Chameli, smiling at her brother, hiding it from Devnath. She wished to convey to Sandip that she had cornered the professor into narrating a legend to them.

"For example Dandakaranya. It perpetuates the name of a young king, Dandaka, who was by no means a man of virtue!"

"Dandakaranya, Grandpa? I read about it in the *Ramayana*. Wasn't it an imaginary forest?" asked Chameli.

"What made you

suspect it to be imaginary? Dandakaranya is the pride of forests in the world. Not only is it a forest of hoary antiquity, but it was a forest with a great civilization. I don't know of any other forest in the world comparable to Dandakaranya."

"But it belonged to the mythical era of the *Ramayana*. Do you mean to say it is still there?" asked Chameli again, betraying genuine curiosity.

"In India where we destroy more than twenty-five thousand hectares of

forest every year, no wonder you should raise such a question. Our forests are shrinking at an alarming rate. Yes, Chameli, Dandakaranya was the stage for several events in the *Ramayana*. It was in this forest that Surpanakha, the demoness sister of Ravana, proposed marriage





to Rama and was repulsed by Lakshmana. It was here that Rama fought numerous demons who harassed and humiliated sages for sport; it was from this forest that the demon-monarch Ravana kidnapped Sita. It was here that Jatayu, the compassionate bird, got killed fighting the kidnapper, so on and so forth. But the majestic forest, though truncated, is there to this day, covering parts of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh."

"Grandpa, what about the story behind its name?" Sandip showed impatience.

Devnath began:

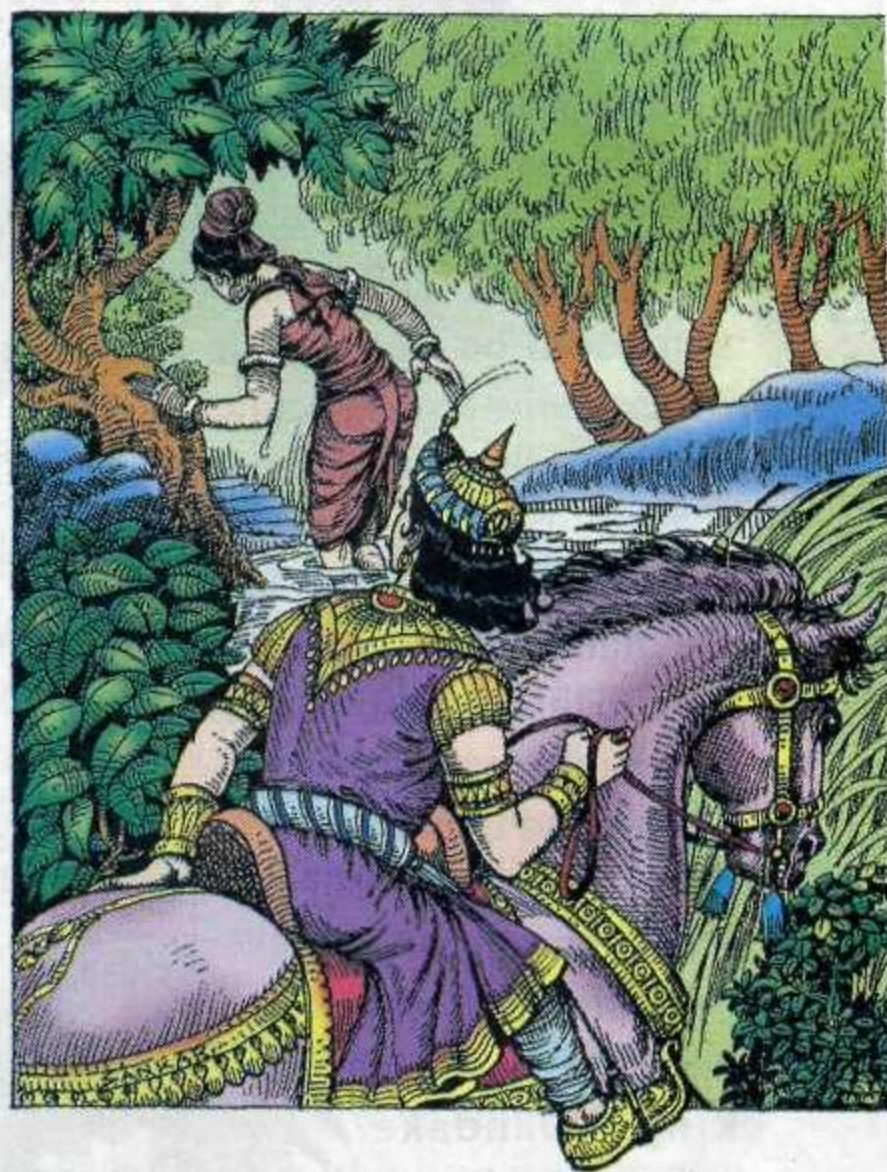
That goes back to a very, very remote past. Once a dynasty called the Dandakas ruled a large region. A king of that dynasty, also known as Dandaka, was a merry youth, always looking for pleasure and nothing else.

One day, while riding through a forest, he stopped near a lake. His eyes were fixed on a young lady coming out of the water. Was she a nymph? King Dandaka could not have even imagined such a beauty to be there among the mortals.

The young lady smiled courteously at the rider and headed in a different direction. But Dandaka dismounted and followed her and

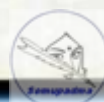
came embarrassingly closer to her.

"Have you lost your way? Are you in need of any help?" asked the shy lady.



"Whichever way I go shall be my way, for I'm the lord over all of them. I'm the king of this land. So far as your second question is concerned, I'm in need of you. Come on. I propose to marry you," replied the young king.

The young lady was stunned. But she recovered her wits promptly and said: "Look here,







young man, you claim yourself to be the king of this land. But I'm reluctant to believe it. A king is expected to know that there are only two normal ways a man can marry a woman: either the woman must wish or at least agree to marry him or the woman's parents must agree to the proposal. In this case neither do I agree to marry you nor have you sought my father's approval for your proposal," she said.

The king laughed in a wild manner. "Proud damsel! I assure you that any father would find it a privilege to have me, the king, as his son-in-law. I don't care for formalities. Come away with me. We'll send our ministers with cartloads of gifts to please your father," spoke Dandaka haughtily and he tried to grab the lady's arm.

"Fie on you, you wayward and arrogant young man!" shouted the young lady, whose name was Araja. "My father is the last person to be appeased even with the gift of your entire kingdom and all your wealth. He is a great sage and nothing matters to him except the quality of a person."

She wriggled out of Dandaka's

clutch. Dandaka ran and caught hold of her again, this time with force. Araja had to struggle hard to get rid of the pest. She was bruised all over and bled when she succeeded at last.

"Begone you wretched creature! Soon you'll face the consequences of your devilry!" she shrieked and disappeared amidst the bushes. She knew the pathways in the forest well. However much anxiously and smartly Dandaka searched, he could not locate her.

A little away, near a stream, stood the hut of Araja's father, the sage Shukracharya. The sage had just opened his eyes after his meditation when he saw his only child, the sweet Araja, standing before him, sobbing and in a state of shock.


"What happened, my daughter?" asked the sage.

Araja broke down and could not speak coherently for a long time. The innocent girl had never known that such things could happen. However, under her father's loving persuasion, she narrated her sad experience to him, haltingly.

The sage meditated for a while and knew that the ruffian was indeed King Dandaka himself. He







knew further that the fellow's conduct represented the degraded state of affairs in the whole kingdom.

The sage prepared a *yajna* and commanded the powers of fury to descend on the kingdom. "Let the entire kingdom go up in flames, sparing only the animals and those who are pious," was his curse.

At once, a billion tongues of fire began licking away the towns and hamlets around the forest, beginning with the royal palace. The fire continued for days and nights, destroying practically everything in the region ruled by the Dandakas. A few pious men and women, who survived the holocaust, had to leave the kingdom for new shelters elsewhere. So fled the animals in search of new pastures.

What a devastation it must have been! Imagine a sight of ashes

and only ashes for hundreds of miles!

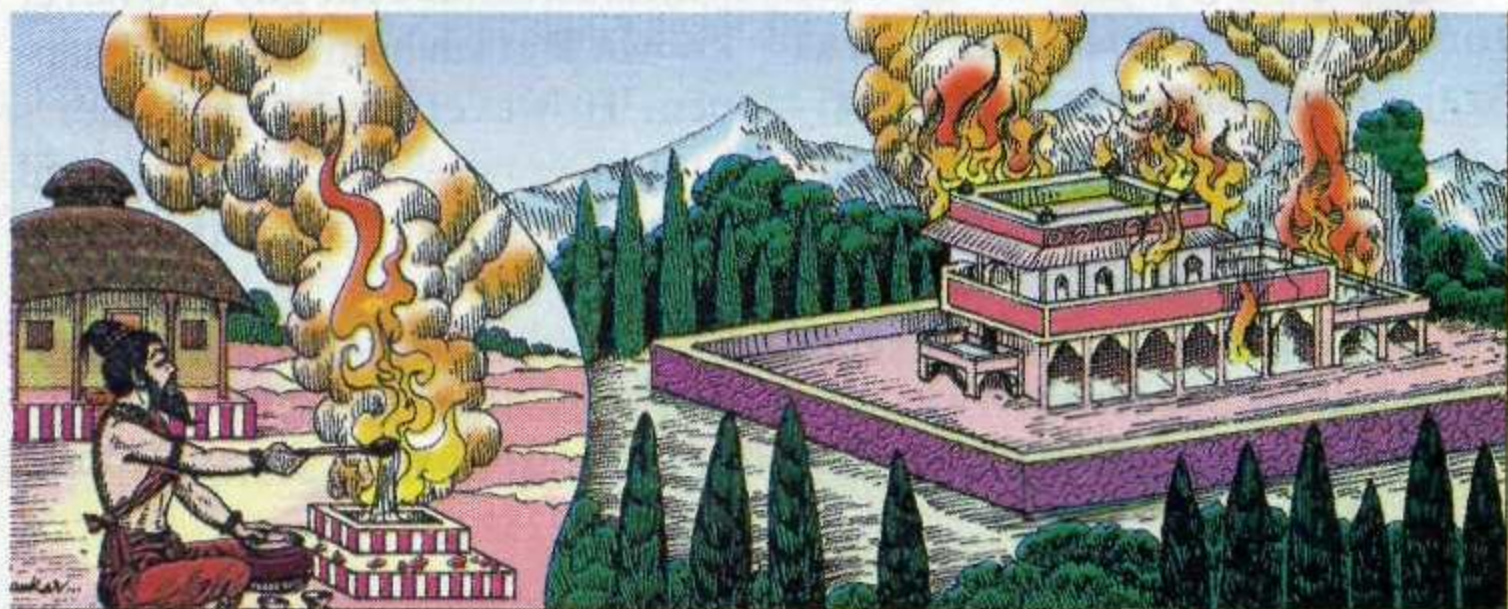
The scene, however, slowly began to change with little plants sprouting over the wasteland, with the help of seeds swept from the forest by breeze and nurtured by the monsoon. Over the next hundred years the entire region became a forest. As centuries passed, it became on one hand, the abode of sages and, on the other, the haunt of demons and ogres.

The sages who knew its origin called it Dandakaranya — in memory of the unfortunate king responsible for its creation as well as the dynasty from which he hailed.

The professor concluded the story there. "Great!" exclaimed Chameli and Sandip together.

- Visvvasu

(To continue)







### THE MIRACLE YET TO HAPPEN

Jagmohan and Kumardev were friends and were very much interested in matters supernatural. But soon they parted ways — Jagmohan fascinated by Tantrik practices, and Kumardev following a yogi.

They did not meet for many years. One night, Kumardev heard repeated knocks on his door. He came out to the verandah and who should he see but Jagmohan?

“Welcome Jagu, I hear much about the miracles you perform. They are quite wonderful. But what brings you here at this hour of the night?” asked Kumardev, while showing Jagmohan

into a room.

“My friend, what you have heard about my performance is correct. I do wonderful things, but I do them with the help of a spirit whom I enslaved through a certain kind of Tantrik practice. But now, instead of my commanding him, he is commanding me. That is to say, I am expected to command him to help me in performing miracles — that is the only field where he can be of any use; he cannot be engaged in any constructive work. But can I go on showing miracles all the time? When he has no work to do, he keeps on pestering me. If I am asleep, he would





wake me up and ask me for work. I get annoyed with him, call him names, but he is no human being to mind all that. The kind of spirit he is, he is quite insensitive to my feelings. What do I do?"

Kumardev thought over his friend's problem for a while.

"Do you have a dog?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed, a very good one," replied Jagmohan.

"Is its tail intact?"

"Yes, it is."

"Good," Kumardev then told Jagmohan what he should do.

Back home, Jagmohan summoned the spirit.

"Here I am, boss, what's the miracle you would like me to perform on your behalf now?" asked the spirit eagerly. He had been quite bored

for lack of work.

"Look here, you great imp, you're quite friendly with my dog, aren't you?"

"I am, boss."

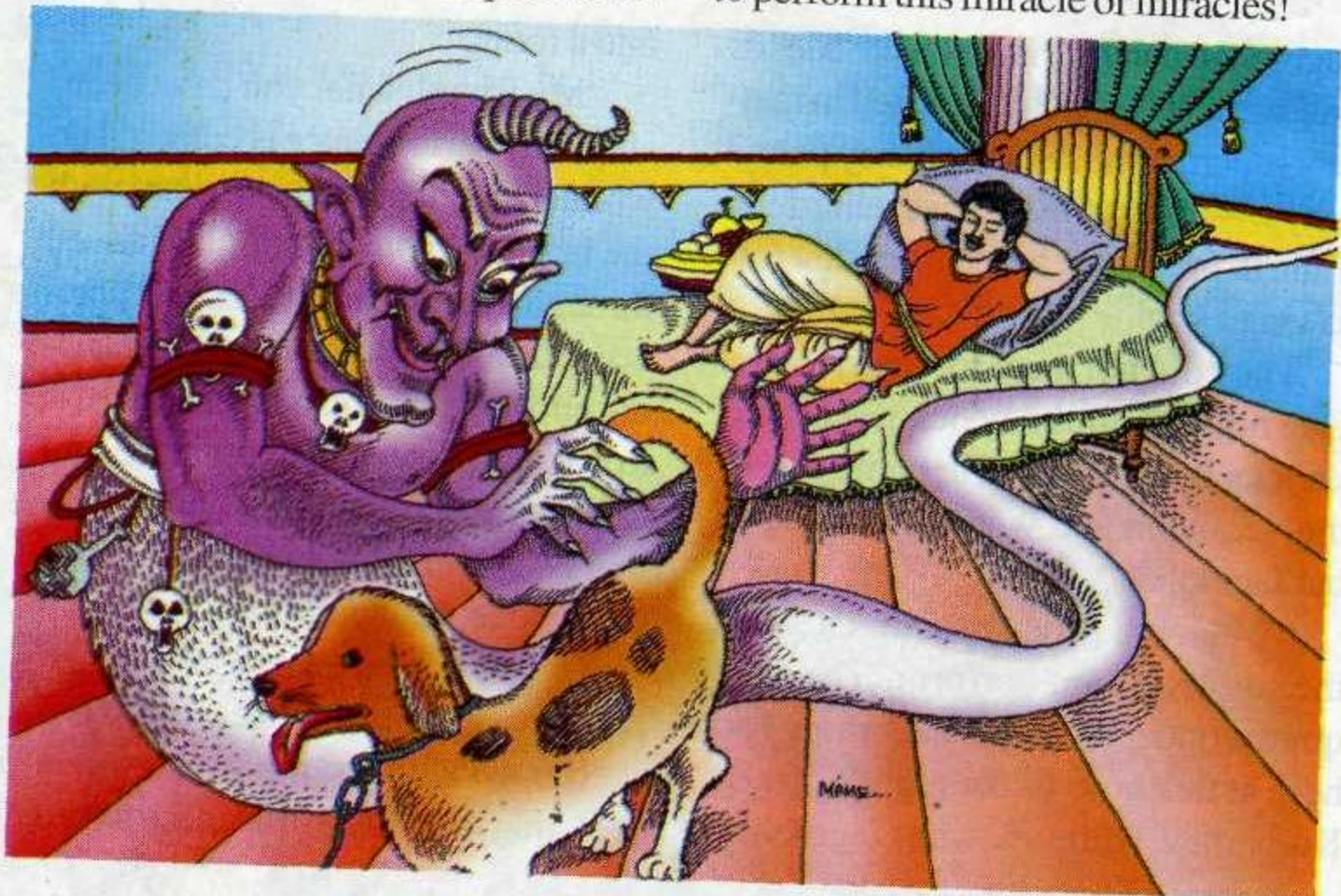
"Fine, the greatest miracle will be to straighten his curly tail. You must do it without causing him any discomfort. Go and begin at once!" commanded Jagmohan.

"But that I can do in a trice!" boasted the spirit.

"I wish you success!" was Jagmohan's response. "Now go and do it!"

And the spirit is still trying to do that. He uncurls the dog's tail, and holds it straight, hoping that it will remain straight after he takes away his hands. But that never happens. The tail curls up at once.

The poor imp has never been able to perform this miracle of miracles!





On the way to Kumbakonam, which is the next major stop on our journey along the Kaveri's banks, lie the towns of Kanjanur and Tiruvisanallur. Kanjanur was once famous for its fine handloom saris. Tiruvisanallur was home to the wonderful humorist and mimic *Vikatan* Ramaswami Sastriar and the well-known social reformer and *bhakta* Sridhar Ayya. Known as *Ayyaval* (a respectful title), Sridhar Ayya gave up a high ministerial post in Mysore to settle down in Tiruvisanallur to a life of prayer and meditation. His compassion and humanity have become legendary.

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## ON THE BANKS OF THE KAVERI - X BENARES OF THE SOUTH

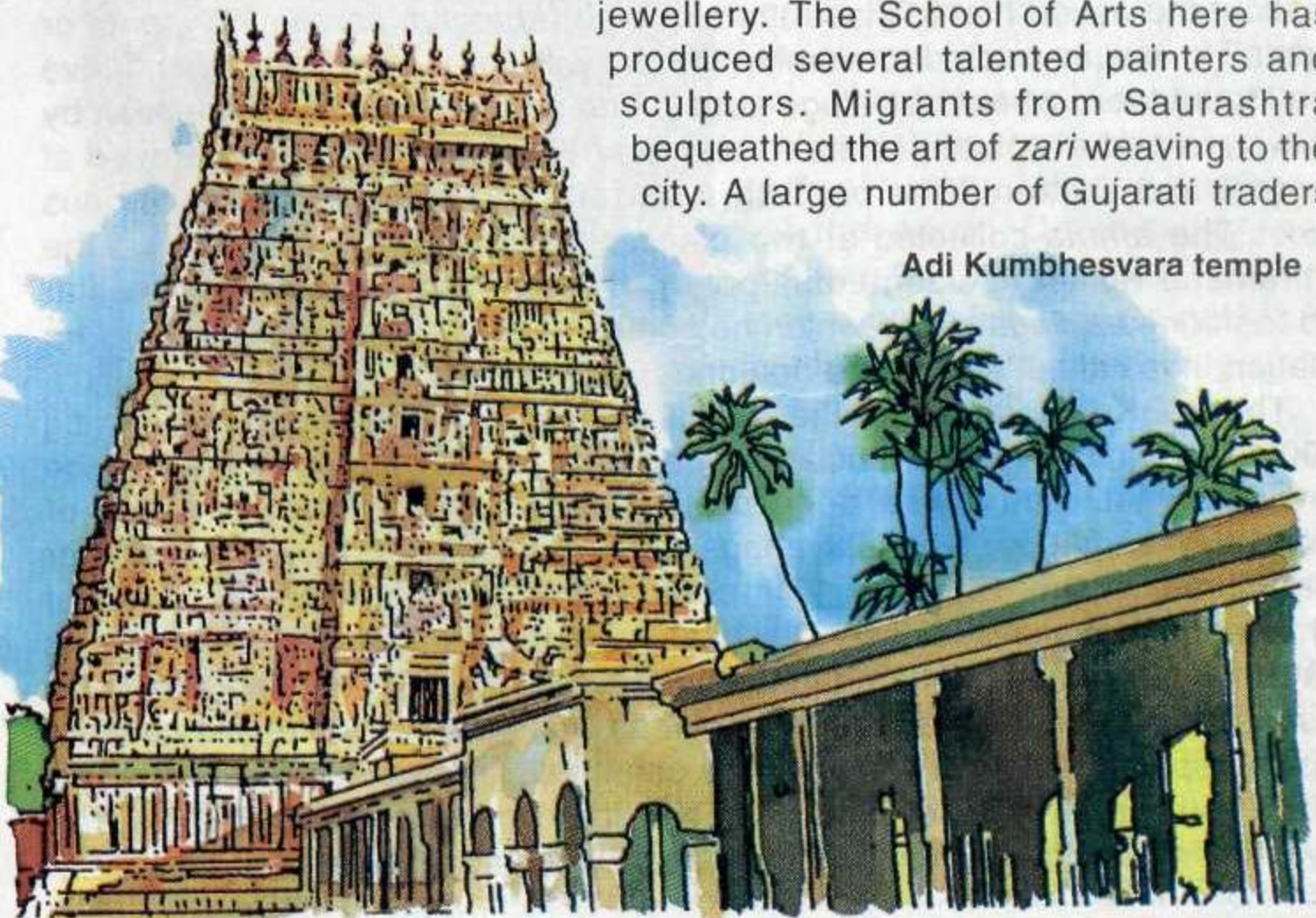
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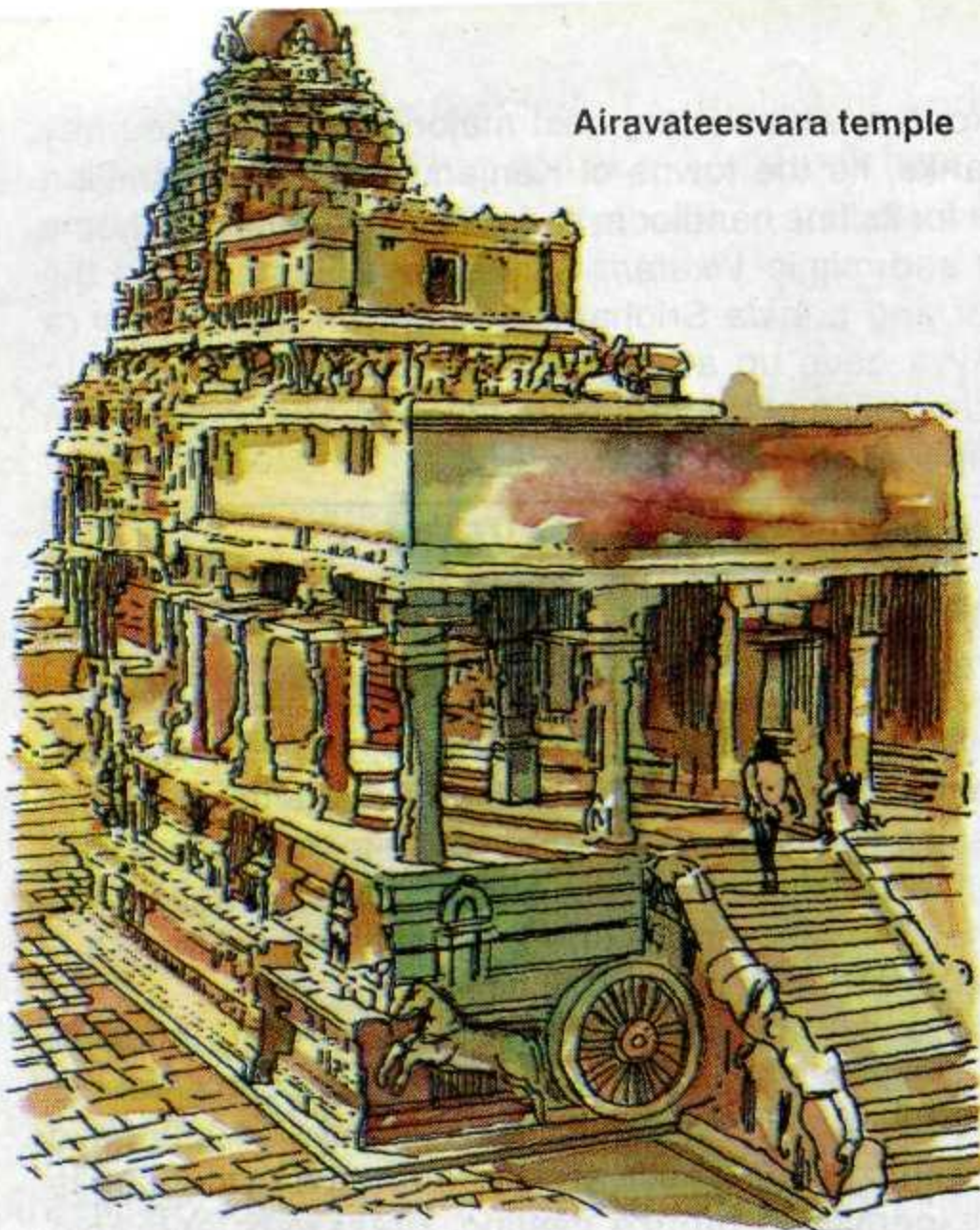
Once, on the day of his mother's *shraddha* ceremony, Ayya saw a poor Harijan lying on the path to the river. The man looked famished and wretched. Ayya's heart melted at the sight. He hurried home and sent him the food cooked for the ceremony. The incensed Brahmins thereupon refused to go on with the rituals. Ayya silently watched their departure, then, substituting them with a blade of *darba* grass, he performed the ceremony himself.

Kumbakonam is known as 'Kashi on the Kaveri'. It is a thriving, bustling city located on the southern banks of the Kaveri river, at its junction with its tributary Arasalar. Kumbakonam has been a religious, cultural and economic hub of the delta since the ninth century. Its silk and cotton weaving industry is highly-regarded as is its expertise in bronze casting, brassware and gold jewellery. The School of Arts here has produced several talented painters and sculptors. Migrants from Saurashtra bequeathed the art of *zari* weaving to the city. A large number of Gujarati traders

Adi Kumbhesvara temple







Airavateesvara temple

are also settled here. Kumbakonam has garnered the epithet, *Cambridge of South India*, for the brilliant scholars who have studied or taught at its Government Arts College.

Kumbakonam is a town of temples, almost 60 of them! The deity who lends his name to the town is Adi Kumbhesvara, whose temple is in the heart of the city. There is a myth linked to the creation of the *lingam* and of the city itself. Just before the *pralaya* or great deluge was to engulf the earth, Shiva gave Brahma the divine seeds of all

creation and asked him to place them in a pot (*kumbha*) containing *amrita* or nectar. He was instructed to worship the pot with *bilva* leaves and then leave it on Mount Meru when the deluge struck. The pot was carried off the peak by the waters and eventually came to rest near Kumbakonam. Shiva arrived at the spot and shattered the pot with an arrow. The contents fell on various places. The *amrita* collected at two places, the Mahamaham Tank and the Pottramarai Kulam (Golden Lotus pond). Shiva mixed sand with the nectar and fashioned a *lingam* with which he finally merged. Since it existed before creation, it is called 'Adi' or 'the first one'.

The Adi Kumbhesvara is the largest temple in Kumbakonam, spanning 9000 sq m. It has three entrances or *gopurams*. The temple dates back to the 7th century AD and it has been praised in the *thevarams* or hymns of Sambandar and Appar. The Vijayanagara Nayaka rulers made a large number of additions in the 16th and 17th centuries. The minister in the court of Achyutappa Nayaka, Govinda Dikshitar, built the 16 shrines or *mandapas* surrounding the Mahamaham tank, several other tanks, wells and *ghats*. He was a scholar, philosopher and humanist as well as a man of selfless action. Known popularly as Ayyan, today, one cannot but remember him, for some public building or the other in Kumbakonam carries his name: Ayyankulam (tank), Ayyantheru (street) and Ayyankadai (bazaar)!



Kumbakonam's other notable temple of the Chola period is the 9th-century Nageswara, one of the finest examples of early Chola architecture and art. Exquisite friezes adorn the sanctuary wall depicting Shiva and episodes from the *Ramayana*.



Mahamaham tank

The only Chola temple dedicated to Vishnu, is the beautiful Sarangapani, with a reclining idol. The main sanctuary has been carved in the imitation of a chariot with superbly-executed prancing horses, elephants and wheels. The Nayakas added a twelve-storeyed *gopuram* to the temple.

The other chariot-like Chola temple is the Airavateesvara at Darasuram, 5 km away from Kumbakonam. It is often described as a sculptor's dream in stone. The facade is in the form of a huge chariot drawn by horses. The



Column relief in the Airavateesvara temple

paintings and sculptures here form a rich storehouse of art. Some pillars in front of the temple produce musical notes when struck. Darasuram was the former Chola capital of Palaiyarai.

Kumbakonam's grandest festival is the Mahamaham which occurs once in twelve years, like the Kumbha Mela of the north. On this day, people believe that all the sacred Indian rivers travel underground and mingle in the waters of the Kaveri. Huge crowds throng the Mahamaham tank to have a dip in it at the auspicious hour. The mass of humanity is so dense that not an inch of water can be seen! The last such Mahamaham took place in February 1992.

The banks of the Kaveri around Kumbakonam are scattered with villages that are either the birthplace or residence of some of the greatest composers and musicians of Tamil Nadu: Kottaiyur, Papanasam,





**Mahamopadhyaya  
U.V. Swaminatha Iyer**

Swamimalai (renowned for its beautiful temple to Karthikeya or Muruga), Umayalpuram, Kapisthalam and Sirkhazi. Kottaiyur has produced a long line of Alvars and Nayanmars, as well as exemplary scholars and musicians. Some of them include *Mahamopadhyaya* U.V. Swaminatha Iyer (1855-1942) who restored the Tamil classics of the Sangam period to their former glory. He is remembered as Tamil *Thatha* (grandfather) even today; his teacher, *Mahavidwan* T.P. Minakshisundaram Pillai, who was a great scholar and composer; Gopalakrishna Bharati, author of *Nandan Charitram* and Vedanayakam Pillai, the author of *Pratapan Mudaliar Charitram*, the first novel in Tamil. All of them grew up on the Kaveri's banks and were nourished by its waters. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer was professor of Tamil at the Kumbakonam College for many years.

And one must not forget the brightest star in Kumbakonam's firmament — Srinivasa Ramanujam. He studied here, and, as we all know, went on to attain fame as the most brilliant mathematician India has ever produced.

After leaving Kumbakonam, the Kaveri flows through Thirubhuvanam. The Kampahareswarar

temple is considered as a masterpiece of Chola architecture. The *vimana* towers over the *gopuram* or entrance, unlike later Chola temples. The front-facing *mandapam* is, like the Darasuram temple, in the form of a chariot. It was built during the reign of Kulottunga III (1178-1218).

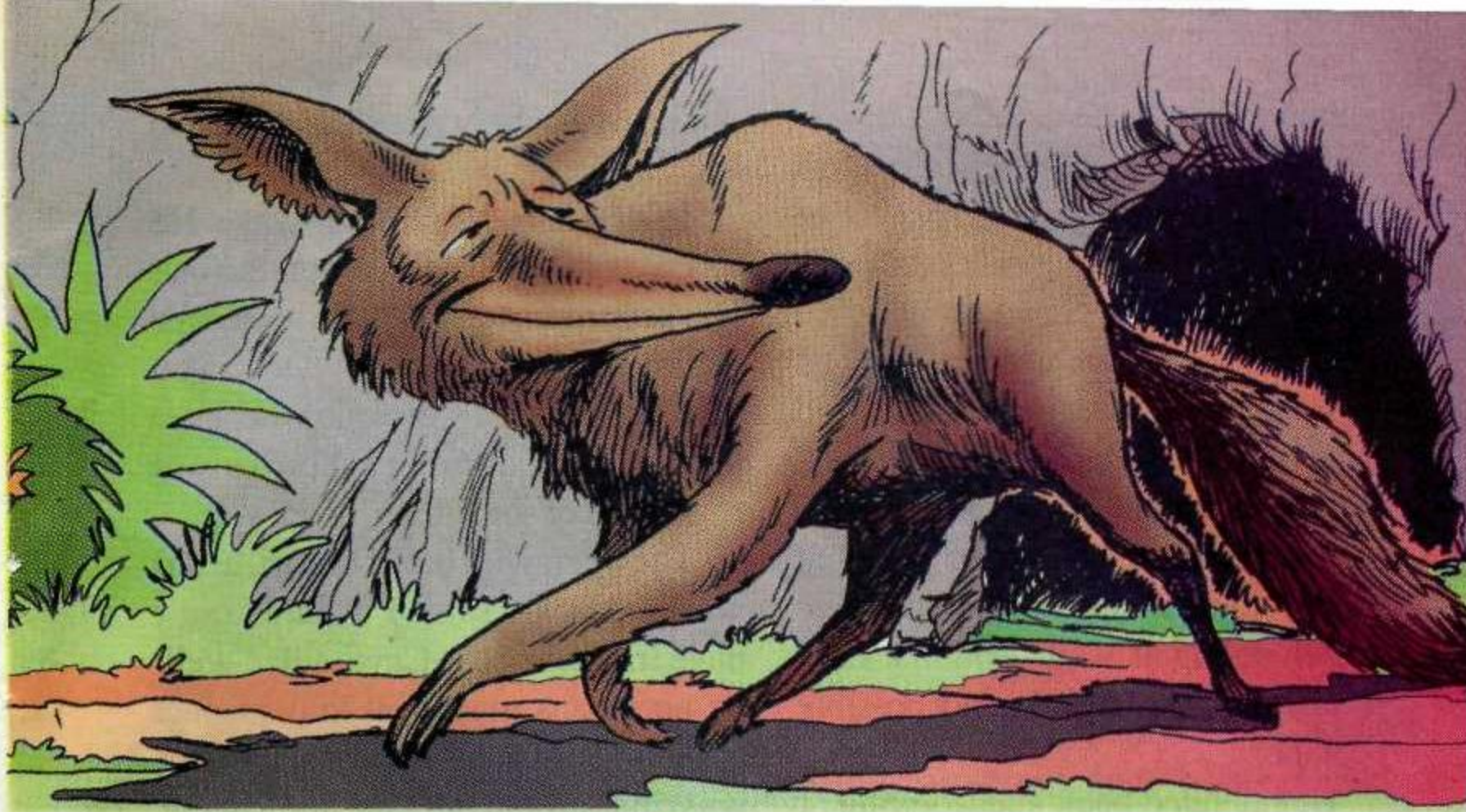
At Tiruvidaimarudur, just a few kilometres away, is one of the largest shrines in Tamil Nadu, dedicated to Shiva as Mahalingeswarar. It is named after a species of tree found here, called *marudamaram*. It is a massive temple, with lofty towers and sprawling *prakarams*. There are 1200 year-old stone inscriptions on its inner walls and its praises have been sung by Nayanmars like Sambandar, Appar and Mannikkavachagar.

The Kaveri's next port of call is the lyrical Mayiladuthurai or Mayuram. The name means literally, 'the place where peacocks dance'. In Mayuram, the Lakoodam bathing ghat is second in sanctity only to Talakaveri. A large number of pilgrims congregate here to bathe on Kadaimukham day which falls in the months of October-November. Mayuram features prominently in the songs and epics on the Kaveri, like the *Pattinapalai*.



**Srinivasa Ramanujam**





## THE TALKING CAVE

Deep in the forest lived a lone jackal. He had chosen a cosy cave for his home. However, he had very little time to relax in the cave except at night. That was because he had to roam about in search of a good breakfast, a better lunch and the best possible dinner.

In another part of the forest lived an aged tiger. Time was when he would dispatch into his tummy a pair of choice rabbits in the morning, a full-size deer at noon and, in the evening, either a travelling salesman or the king's constable nabbed from the road that zigzagged by the forest.

But he had grown weak. Since his recovery from a massive heart attack,

he could give chase only to turtles. And turtles hardly cared to visit the forest.

One winter evening, wandering on his aching legs, the tiger chanced upon the jackal's cave. Curiosity led him into it. He sniffed the air and knew the kind of creature that dwelt there.

'Let me lie down here. I can have a good rest. At the right moment, my supper would just walk into my mouth,' he mumbled as he sprawled on the floor.

Late in the evening the jackal was on his way home. He whistled merrily as he ambled along leisurely, dreaming of a blissful sleep. As he was just about to enter the cave he saw, in the bright moonlight, some enormous pawmarks





pointing towards his cave.

'My, my! I never knew that my feet left such brilliantly outlined prints!' he said to himself, feeling rather flattered. 'What a pity that I have no mirror. I seem to have grown as big as a tiger!'

But as soon as he uttered the word 'tiger', his heart shrank. He told himself, 'The heart, however, does not seem to have grown as big as a tiger's. In that case, I doubt if my paws could have grown so big as well. And that only means that these marks cannot possibly be mine!'

He bounded back and, looking at the cave with considerable alarm, stood thoughtful for a moment. Should he go in and find out whether the intruder-

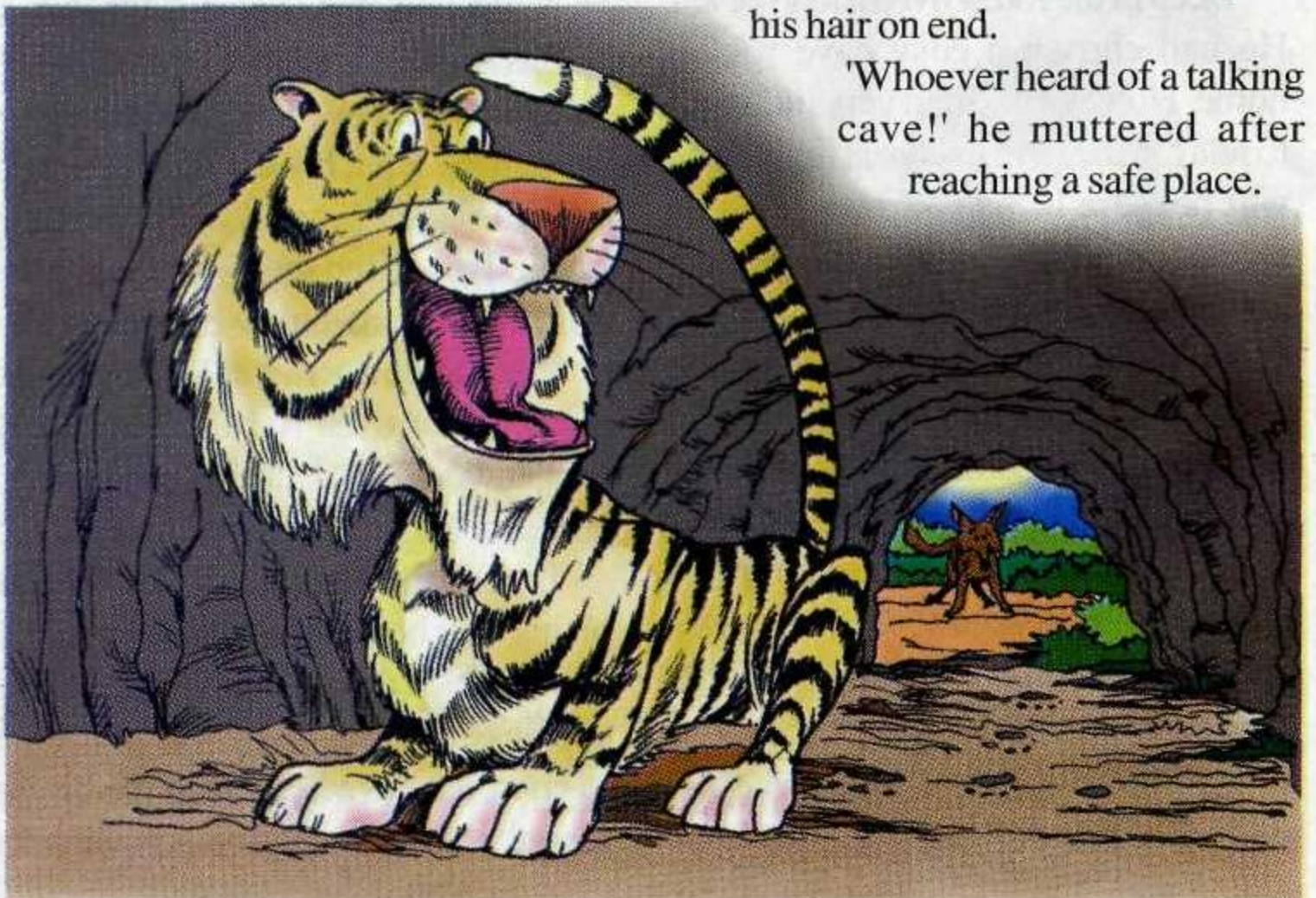
whoever that be-was still there or had left.

In a flash he had a brain-wave. He shouted out, "Hello, Cave, how is it that you keep mum tonight?" He waited for some time for an answer. "Don't you give out a roar of welcome whenever you see me coming? You're not frightened of something, or are you?"

The tiger, with bated breath, heard what the jackal said. 'I'm sure I must have frightened the Cave, silly! Well, by no means must I let him suspect anything!' he thought. Then, without wasting any time, he bellowed: "Welcome, jackal dear, welcome home, your sweet, sweet home!"

The jackal sprang up in an instant and ran for his life, his teeth rattling and his hair on end.

'Whoever heard of a talking cave!' he muttered after reaching a safe place.





## Myself and My World

### **THE INVISIBLE TONIC**

There was a charitable hospital run by a trust. Doctors who worked there were mostly those who had retired from their regular jobs. Some others, who had their jobs or private practice, devoted their spare time to the charity hospital. Doctors of both categories worked on a voluntary basis.

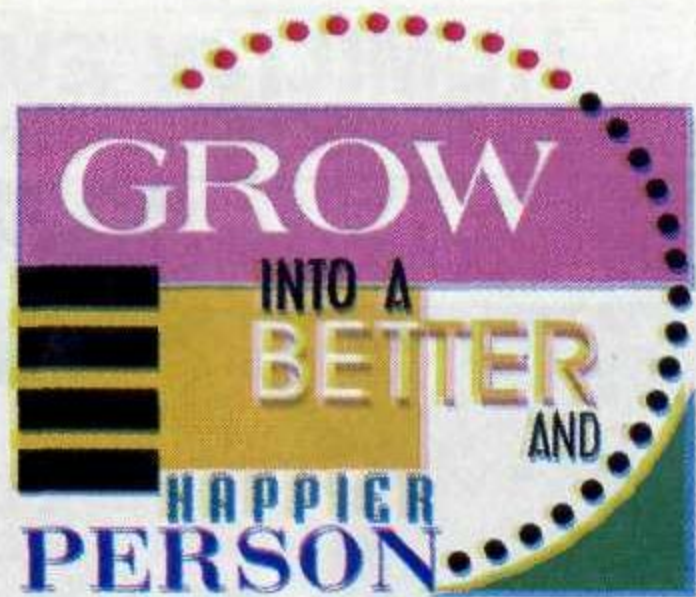
One evening, a doctor was in the reception room when an old man walked in and greeted him.

"Doctor, I don't expect you to remember me. I was once in your hospital as a patient for six long months. I was cured, but I had no money to make any donation to your institution. Recently, I received a windfall. An old relative died, leaving me a good amount of money. Here is my humble contribution for your hospital, and here is a personal gift for you."

The old man placed on the table a cheque meant for the institution and handed over a costly gold-cased wrist watch to the doctor.

"But gentleman, why to me? You must have been treated by five or six doctors!"

"Correct," responded the old man. "But you were the one who held me by the hand, guided me to the portico,



called a taxi for me, and gave me a good-bye smile."

The apparently insignificant incident had great significance. This doctor might not have been the doctor who really cured the patient. But his contribution to the post-hospital life of the patient could have been very valuable. The old man felt that he was not just a patient but a human being. The last smile of the doctor must have been the most helpful tonic for the patient during his convalescence.

However good and great one may be in one's profession or position, it is the human touch to the work one does which makes it beautiful.

But this touch cannot be the outcome of a forced sense of duty. It has to be natural. And be sure, we all have that natural capacity to love our work and respect those for whom we work.

What is important, this will make ourselves happy.





# HUMILITY EVEN FOR KINGS

Artist : Sankar Lee

A king, renowned for his wisdom and justice, one day goes to the forest for a hunt...



... and soon gets separated from his men. He rides on alone.

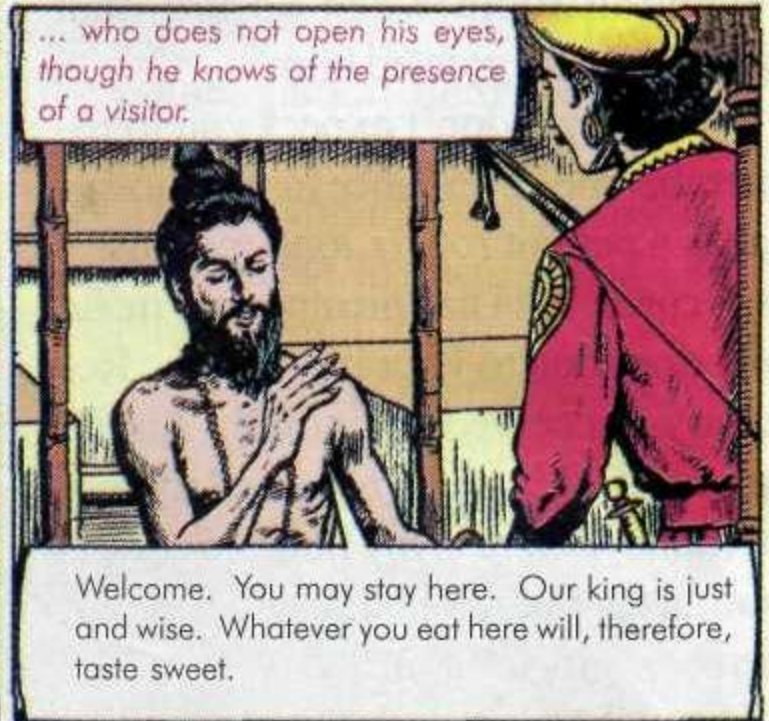
How long can I search for them? I'm tired. I must rest for sometime.



He comes upon a hermitage, and dismounts. He stands before the hermit...



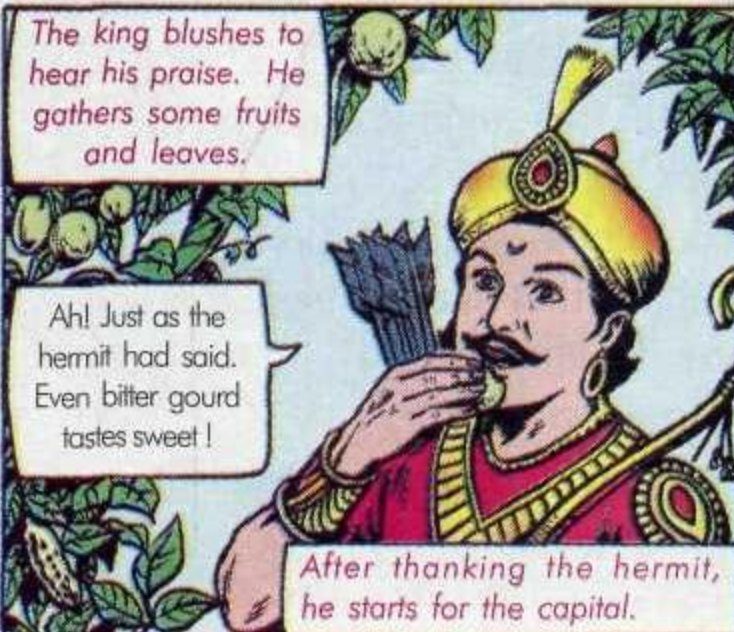
... who does not open his eyes, though he knows of the presence of a visitor.



Welcome. You may stay here. Our king is just and wise. Whatever you eat here will, therefore, taste sweet.

The king blushes to hear his praise. He gathers some fruits and leaves.

Ah! Just as the hermit had said. Even bitter gourd tastes sweet!



After thanking the hermit, he starts for the capital.

Thank god! At last I've found them!

There! Our king!

Hail!





By the time the king returns to the palace, vanity has overtaken him.



If a hermit in the forest can say that, my people should also know how just and wise a ruler I am!

The king decides to hold a feast, and sends for the royal cook.



Prepare a feast... make a curry with bitter gourd from the forest... a pudding with only neem leaves...

Yes, your majesty.

The noblemen and courtiers wait till the king is served. He tastes the gourd curry; his face contorts. Then he puts a bit of the neem pudding in his mouth.



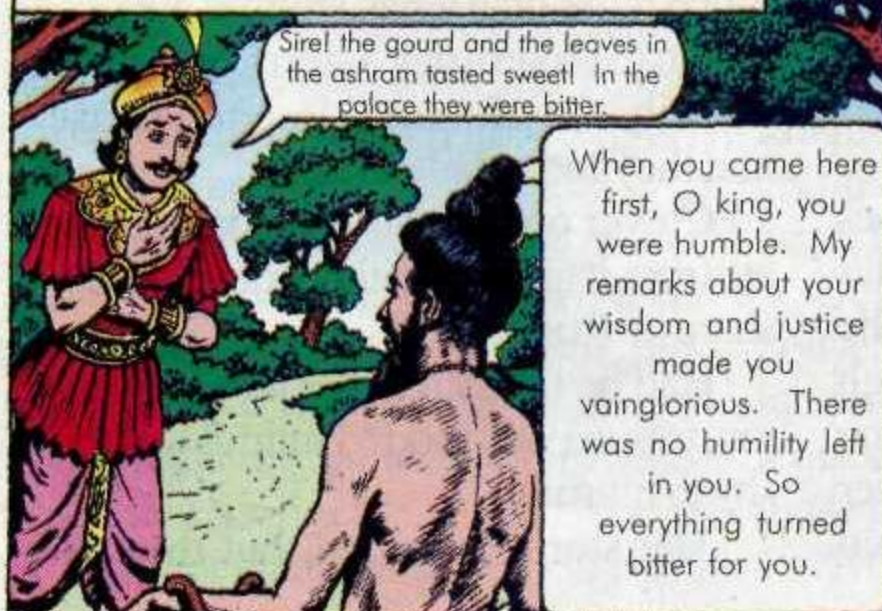
Awful! How bitter it is!

The king tries to hide his chagrin. He beckons the cook near him and whispers some instructions.



Take all these away! And serve the usual items.

After the guests depart, the king rides to the forest, and tells the hermit about the feast.



Sire! the gourd and the leaves in the ashram tasted sweet! In the palace they were bitter.

When you came here first, O king, you were humble. My remarks about your wisdom and justice made you vainglorious. There was no humility left in you. So everything turned bitter for you.

As the king rides back, he is struck by shame. He realises, even kings have to be humble.







## Tales from many lands (Iran)

# TRUTHFUL AND CLEVER

It was night and two travellers had lodged themselves in a roadside inn.

"What's your name?" one asked the other.

"Truthful is my name. And what's yours?" asked the first one.

"Clever is my name. My father could not have chosen a better name!" said the second, proudly.

"I wish my father had given me a different name. Truthful is a great word. It is so difficult to be always truthful. All I can say is I try!" said the first one.

"But it is not so difficult to be clever — I mean for one who is really clever!" said Clever.

The capital town of the kingdom was the destination for both. The regular road would require eight days to be there. But if one dared pass through the forest, it would take half that time to reach the town. Truthful and Clever had become friends. So, they decided

to pass through the forest.

Both had brought with them their food for the road. Said Clever: "Instead of opening both food parcels at the same time, we can open one parcel first and later the other parcel. What do you say?"

"Fine!" said Truthful. "Let's open my parcel first. Then we can open yours."

Clever happily agreed to it. Both shared Truthful's food for the first three days. The food would have lasted for another day or two, but Clever ate much more than what Truthful ate.

On the fourth day a storm broke out. Luckily they found a deserted house and they took shelter inside.

Clever opened his food parcel, but ate from it himself without offering any share to Truthful.

Had he forgotten that his companion, too, needed food? Truthful was too shy to murmur.

The storm subsided, but the rain





continued. The next day, when Clever started eating his food, Truthful hemmed and hawed and told him: "My friend, how do you eat without offering me my share? Don't forget that my food was finished because you shared it!"

"My friend, I'm merely being truthful to my name. I'm being clever. I don't know for how long the rains would continue. Shouldn't I preserve food for myself?" replied Clever.

Truthful sighed and said: "I don't mind going hungry. But someone told me in my dream that if you don't give me my share, you shall one day be shared by others in an undesirable way."

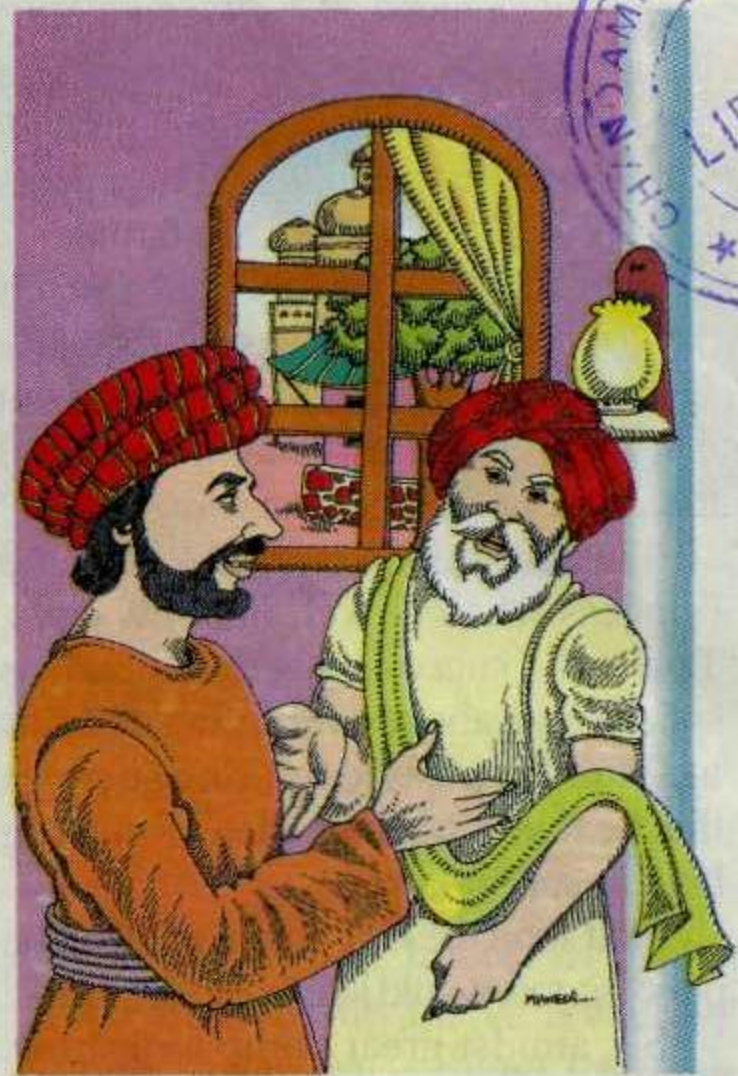
"Never mind your dream!" commented Clever. Next morning, when Truthful opened his eyes, he saw that the rain had stopped and Clever had departed, probably in the company of some other travellers who were passing by. Truthful satisfied his hunger with some fruits which he found on some nearby trees, but felt too tired to resume walking. He thought of passing that day in that house, hoping that he too, would meet with some travellers and join them.

At night he saw some beasts coming towards the house. He hid behind a huge stone lying in a corner. In the faint moonlight he saw a lion, a tiger, and a jackal entering the house.

"I smell a man!" said the lion.

"Possibly some travellers had taken rest here. They must have left, leaving their smell behind! Nobody would care to pass a night in a haunted house in the forest!" said the tiger.

Then they talked of several things.



"The princess is seriously ill. Nobody is able to cure her. I know the cure. But how can I enter the palace and disclose it?" said the jackal.

"What's the cure?" asked the lion.

"If the palace guards would not allow jackal to enter the palace, do you think they would allow a lion to do so? However, the cure is in a mysterious root with which a farmer feeds his cattle. His cattle are the healthiest in the kingdom. But he does not tell his secret to anybody," said the jackal and he told about the farmer and his village.

Before dawn the animals left the house. Forthwith, Truthful left for the farmer's village, and met the farmer and requested him to treat the princess with those special roots.

"My friend, I feel nervous at the very





sight of the palace. Why, I will faint at the sight of the king! I shall give you the roots. I'm sure you'll receive a handsome reward from the king. You may pass on a share of it to me!" said the farmer.

Truthful reached the palace with the roots and claimed that he could cure the princess.

"Young man, should it be found out that you were merely kidding, you shall lose your head!" he was warned.

Truthful nodded. He treated the princess who got well in a few days. Truthful's success, his conduct, his speech and, above everything else, his truthfulness pleased the king so much that he toyed with the idea of making him his son-in-law!

And soon the king found out that the princess, too, would like that to happen!

So, amidst great pomp and show, Truthful was married to the princess. The couple shifted to a magnificent palace. The first thing Truthful did after that was to reward the farmer with a basketful of gold.

It so happened that while he was strolling on his palace roof one evening, he saw Clever passing by the house. He sent his chief servant to call him. Clever could not believe his eyes when he recognised Truthful. He fell at his

feet and said, "Sir, pardon this sinner!"

"Don't call me sir; I'm your friend. Had you not left me alone, I would have remained the poor man I was!" remarked Truthful.

Since Truthful was always truthful, he frankly told all that had happened to him at his companion's query.

Clever enjoyed Truthful's generous hospitality that night and bade him good-bye in the morning. Straight he proceeded to the deserted house in the forest and hid behind the stone in a corner. He expected the beasts to come there and talk of more mysteries from which he would profit.

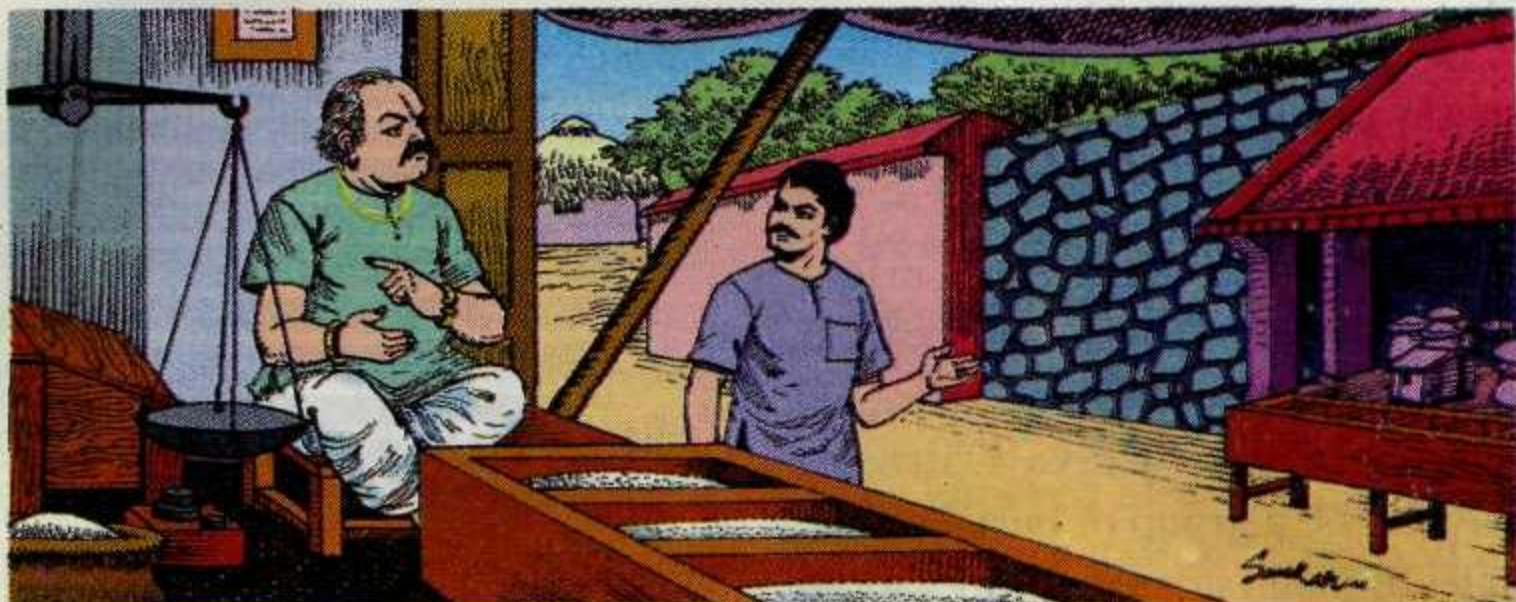
The beasts did come. As soon as they entered, the lion said: "Once again I smell man!"

"Well, last time we did not pay heed to your suspicion. In a sense it was good, for the man who heard us from his hiding cured the princess and married her, too! But we were deprived of a good dish. We need not suffer the same loss every time!" said the tiger.

Before long they found out Clever. As they began tearing him to share among themselves, Clever remembered Truthful's dream. But now it was too late.







## THE DIFFERENCE

Chandangram was a prosperous village. Bhimdas and Mohan Rao were two grocers who had their shops facing each other's.

Both the shopkeepers were known to be honest. Neither of them priced their wares unreasonably high or sold anything adulterated.

Both the shops did well. If Bhimdas did not have any item, he would direct the customer to Mohan Rao and vice versa.

When Mohan Rao died his sons were not interested in running the shop. Bhimdas asked his own nephew, Samardas, to take over the shop and carry on the trade.

Samardas did as advised. At first customers thronged his shop as they used to do during Mohan Rao's time. But by and by their number dwindled.

"Uncle, I'm as honest as Mohan Rao. But why do I have fewer customers?" Samardas asked Bhimdas, one day.

"My son, I was about to tell you the reason myself. I've been watching your method of weighing things. You first put a large quantity into the scale and then go on taking it out till it balances with the weights. I do the opposite. I put less to begin with and then go on adding to the quantity. The customer feels unhappy when he sees his stuff being reduced. He feels happy when he sees it increasing — even though either way the weight is the same!" explained Bhimdas.

Samardas now tried this method. Before long, there was a marked difference in the number of customers who came to his shop.





## THE ENIGMA OLDER THAN THE PYRAMIDS

It was a beautiful day, crisp, bright, and lively with the singing of the birds, when Anne May, a Norwich teacher, paid a visit to Clava Cairns in Inverness, a group of burial cairns, piles of rough stones burying a tomb, dating from the early Bronze Age. Anne walked around the stone monuments, inspecting them with interest. Then going to one of them, she leisurely leaned against it and relaxed, briefly closing her eyes. But when she opened them, lo and behold! in front of her there was a gathering of men dressed in shaggy tunics and cross-gartered trousers. They were apparently dragging a huge monolith. She even noticed their unusual figures that sported long dark hair. Alas, the strange vision disappeared with the interruption of a throng of tourists that entered the glade. Anne May was at once transported back to her present surroundings in the 20th century.

The Norwich teacher appears to have experienced a "timeslip". The "slip" occurred at a precise place and moment, when her body touched the monolith and she witnessed cairns being built nearly 2,000 years ago. This incident took place on May 26, 1973.

## UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

Now a perplexing question that arises is, what magical powers did the apparently simple stone contain to have transported Anne May into a very distant past?

Great Britain abounds in megalithic sites, which have puzzled man since time immemorial. According to an estimation, there are about 40,000 to 50,000 such stone monuments in Western Europe. For what purpose did ancient man erect these single standing stones, and avenues and circles made of them? Indeed, the time and stupendous effort that he must have put into transporting and installing these colossal structures indicate that whatever significance there was behind them must have been of the highest order. It was even thought that giants of yore had erected them, or were they, as some legends say, the outcome of the wizard Merlin's magic?

The tallest standing monolith in Great Britain, which is supposed to





be the oldest and the most mysterious, is the 25ft stone pillar at Rudstone, Humberside. A church came up beside the monolith and the stone is known as the "grandmother of the church". Then, there is the group of single standing stones called Devil's Arrow, near Boroughbridge in Yorkshire. But it is in Cornwall that the megaliths are found in abundance.

Stall Moor near Ivy Bridge sports the longest existing row of stones that run for 4km. There are about 900 known stone rings in Great Britain, consisting of various forms, perfect circles, ellipses, and egg-shapes and flattened circles. King's Men or Rollright Stones, 30 km northwest of Ox-

ford, is an example of the truly circular ring. It is about 100 ft in diameter, and there is a legend that its stones are uncountable as every survey of the site has recorded a different number!

But the greatest surviving megalithic structure in the British Isles is the Stonehenge on the Salisbury Plain. It is a circular setting of large standing stones surrounded by earthwork called the henge.

(See pictures on the following pages.)

To the northeast lies the long grassy avenue and near it stands the Heel Stone, a crudely formed slanting boulder, which derives its name from a large nick near the base. The story goes that the devil, enraged at a certain friar, threw this great rock at him and it struck him on the heel. But the



*Devil's Arrow*

purity and virtuousness of the monk was such that at the end it was the stone that received the brunt. An earthwork encircles the Stonehenge in a ring 320 ft in diameter. Inside, there is another ring consisting of 56 pits called the Aubrey

Holes, after their 17th century discoverer. Then come two more pit circles, the Y and Z Holes followed by the first of the gigantic stone colonnades, the Sarsen Circle.

This in brief is the enigmatic Stonehenge which is supposed to have been erected more than 500 years before the pyramids. But why was it at all built? What purpose did it serve? The mystery remains unsolved and, according to author





Henry James, the Stonehenge “stands as lonely in history as it does on the great plain”.

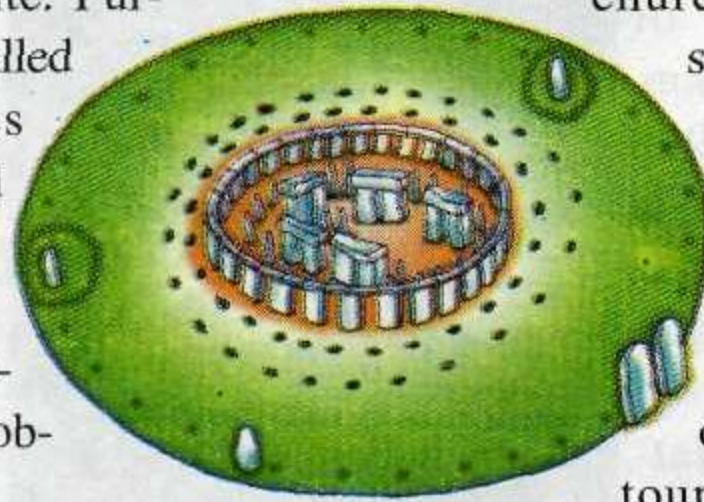
In the 18th century, William Stukeley, an Englishman, came out with a startling revelation that Stonehenge is aligned with the mid-summer sunrise. Later eminent research scientists and astronomers found enough evidence to suggest that there were probably solar and lunar alignments built into the designs of the stones at the site. Fur-

ther, the ring of pits called the Aubrey Holes could have been used for predicting eclipses. Then, was Stonehenge an astronomical, prehistoric observatory?

Alexander Thom, a professor at Oxford, surveyed and studied more than 600 megalithic sites. He finally came to the conclusion that ancient man had laid out his stone monuments with astonishingly precise engineering skill in astronomical alignment. He discovered a basic unit of measurement which he called the megalithic yard. It was found to be a constant feature of the dimensions of all the stone circles. The radii and the circumferences of the structure, and the distances between individual stones

were found to be always multiples of the megalithic yard. Indeed, early man had constructed his monuments with great geometrical precision, skill, and forethought. But what had inspired him to do so?

One day in 1921, Alfred Watkins, a Herefordshire brewer, had a bewildering vision. All the megalithic sites, including stone circles, which were 900 in number, even stone rows, castles, and churches, stood in one



straight line, which he called the ‘ley line’. He even noticed that holy wells always marked the end of the leys. Aston-  
toundingly, hundreds

of ancient stones situated along this mysterious line were found to have healing powers. The most well known of such miraculous stones is Men-an-tol, the Stone of the Hole, that stands at the end of the Cornish ley. Passing through the central hole and then going round it reportedly cured those suffering from rickets and cricks in the neck. Could it be by chance or sheer coincidence that these stone monuments have come to lie on a straight line? Do really in-





visible channels of power and energy flow through these "ley lines" on which the stones stand? Man is still wondering for an answer!

Tom Lethbridge held a pendulum over one of the structures in the circle of standing stones called Merry Maidens, in Cornwall. He wanted to determine the age of the monument. Suddenly his pendulum began to rotate like the propeller of a plane and swung in wide circles for several minutes. He was finally able to calculate the age of the stone from the number of swings of the pendulum. Later sophisticated scientific methods confirmed his conclusion. Lethbridge even experienced a mild electric shock when he placed his hand on the stone, as if it was some kind of charged battery!

Amazing, isn't it? An immobile, mute stone, and yet it seems to activate so much movement and energy!

A phantom black dog, huge, shaggy, with fiery eyes is said to frequent these prehistoric sites of standing stones. It suddenly appears from nowhere and then disappears equally mysteriously. Could it have any connection with these silent monuments? This strange phenomenon has also remained unexplained.

The silent megalithic monuments and the Stonehenge have remained as enigmatic as the great Sphinx of Giza. Why were they at all constructed? What was their real purpose? "It may have been a Temple for some form of worship — or a Court of Justice — or a Hall for ceremonial meetings of tribal chiefs. All we can say with certainty is: 'We do not know', said E. Herbert Stone. Indeed, we do not know yet, but we are patiently waiting when time will one day unravel to us the stubbornly guarded secrets!





## THE TRUTHFUL NEIGHBOURS

The wealthy man had bought a new house on the outskirts of the town. He loved peace and silence and he was happy that in that area there were very few houses. In any case, there was no house near his building except two huts, one on either side.

But his happiness was short-lived at night. From one of the huts came continuous noise of sawing and from the other hammering.

On enquiry from his servant in the morning, he learnt that the hut on the eastern side of the house belonged to a carpenter and the one on the western side belonged to a blacksmith. Both of them were quite poor.

He first called the carpenter. "Will you promise to move to some other house if I give you a thousand rupees?" he asked the man.

"Gladly, sir," consented the carpenter. He went back with the money.

The wealthy man then called the blacksmith and put forth the same proposal to him. He, too, agreed to it immediately and received the reward gratefully.

That night the wealthy man went to bed, congratulating himself for the safety he had ensured for his sleep.

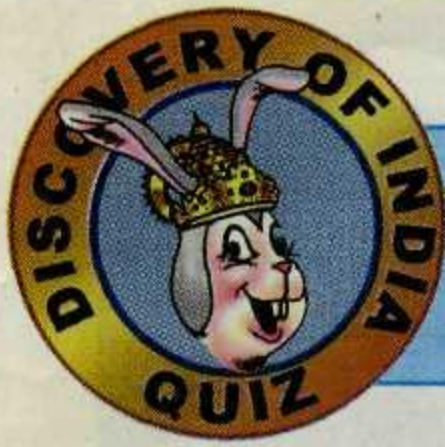
But, he woke up with a jolt. The noises were very much there and they continued till long.

In the morning he summoned his servant and asked him about it.

"They have moved places, sir! The carpenter shifted to the blacksmith's hut and the blacksmith to the carpenter's. They are not such people who would go back on their words!" explained the servant.







# CHANDAMAMA

## ENRICH YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Answers to the quiz published in this will appear in the next issue. Meanwhile, try to find the answers yourself and enrich your knowledge of India's antiquity and heritage.



1. (a) Which work in ancient Indian Literature can be called the first novel?
- (b) Which great work in ancient Indian Literature is believed to have been composed jointly by two Rishis?
- (c) To which work goes the credit of being the first historical drama of India?
- (d) Who was the great Indian playwright after Kalidasa? What is his famous work?

2  
A prince with an army was travelling, accompanying a horse let loose by his elder brother, the king. If the horse returned without being detained by any other king, its owner would become the king of kings. But the prince and the army accompanying the horse were challenged by a young man. A battle ensued. The prince fell down dead. But a lady resurrected him and it was found out that the young man was none other than the prince's own son.

Who was the prince, who was the young man, and who was the lady?







# INDIA

Then and Now

## SRINAGAR

### THE CITY BEAUTIFUL AND GRACEFUL

Srinagar, the capital of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, as its name signifies, is a city beautiful and graceful not because its name says so, but because nature has made it so. Situated at 1,768 metres above the sea-level, the city's features are dominated by the charming Dal Lake as well as a number of parks and gardens. Besides, there flows the river Jhelum.

Kashmir in mythical times, was a vast stretch of water. It was occupied by a demon named Jalodbhava —

meaning one who emerged from water. He would leap out of his water-kingdom and damage or destroy the localities around it. Nobody could harm him as long as he was in the water. That was the boon which protected him.

The great sage Kashyap knew the secret of the demon's life. Using a plough which had supernatural powers, he drew every drop of that huge expanse of water. Once the area dried up, the demon lost his power and died.

It is said that the land was called Kashyap-mir, shortened into Kashmir.

According to the *Rajatarangini* by Kalhana, the ancient chronicle of the kings of Kashmir, Srinagar was founded by Emperor Ashoka. In fact, the credit for the founding of the city should go to his daughter, Charuvati. On a visit to that lovely place with her father, she was fascinated by the Dal Lake and said: "What a serene place for meditation!"





That inspired Ashoka to build a Buddhist Vihara there. Around it, by and by, grew up a picturesque town.

We do not know who gave the place the name Srinagar. According to one legend, the name is derived from its much older identity, Suryanagar.

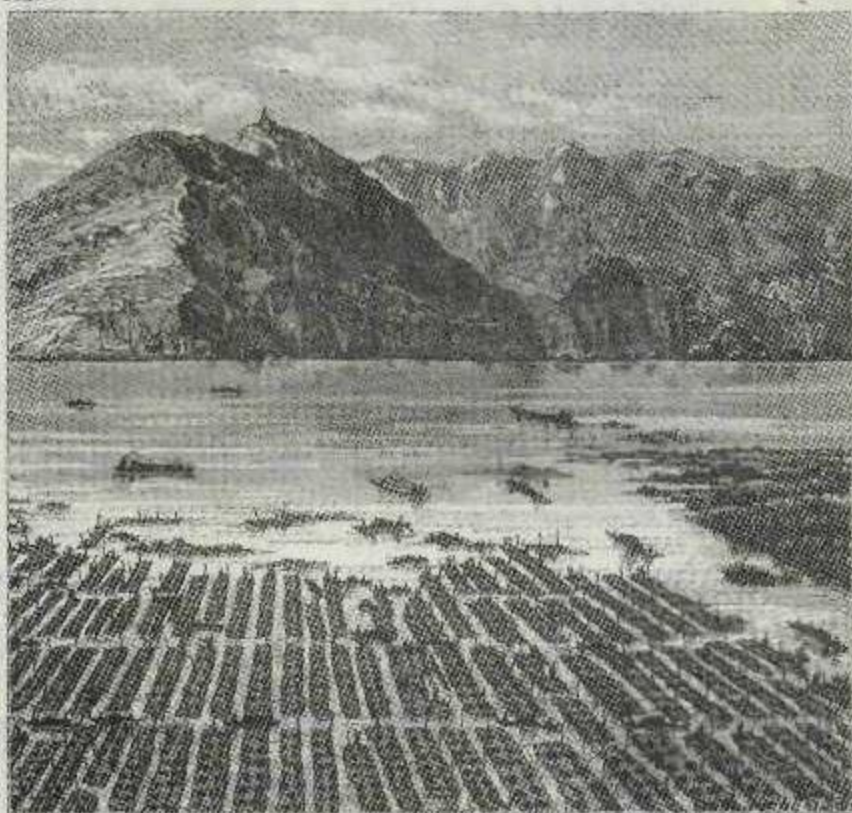
When India was partitioned in 1947, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir was given the option to merge his state with either India or Pakistan. Before the Maharaja could decide his course of action, Pakistan grew impatient and pushed a horde of hill-people, with the support of its army, into the state. The Maharaja merged his state with India and immediately the Indian army repulsed the Pakistani stooges, but a part of Ladakh district remained under Pakistani occupation. That was because the United Nations cried a halt to the conflict, after drawing a line of cease-fire.

Pakistan, as the world knows, continues to disturb the peace of Kashmir. Srinagar, which used to draw a large number of tourists, wore a desolate look for years. Things, however, are now changing.

While the good old Srinagar has such important sights as Chashma Sahi — the waterfall with gardens, Nishat Bagh or the garden of Bliss, Shalimar Bagh — another garden laid out by Jahangir, Hari Parvat, Shankaracharya Hill atop which Shankaracharya and Sri Aurobindo meditated, Hazratbal Mosque where a strand of hair belonging to Prophet Muhammed is preserved,

the modern city of Srinagar, with its hotels, house-boats, and other amenities, is always ready to receive tourists. Its largest pre-occupation, indeed, is tourism. Srinagar has its educational institutions situated amidst idyllic surroundings. They are the University of Jammu and Kashmir, the University of Kashmir, and the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Science and Technology, apart from other colleges and academies.

Besides the many places of scenic



*A floating garden — an old picture.  
On facing page: House-boats on the Dal lake.*

beauty, like Srinagar, Kashmir is famous for its handicrafts, especially items made of papier-mache, wood-carving, carpets and shawls, and saffron taken from the flowers of *kesar* and used in the kitchen, and musk from the musk-deer used in perfumes and pharmaceuticals.





✱ *Who are the ten Sikh Gurus?*

-Sanjeevani Rao, Bangalore

They are Guru Nanak (1469-1538), the founder of Sikhism, Guru Angad (1538-52), Guru Amardas (1552-74), Guru Ramdas (1574-81), Guru Arjan (1581-1606), Guru Hargovind (1606-45), Guru Har Rai (1645-61), Guru Har Kishan (1661-64), Guru Tej Behadur (1664-75), and Guru Govind Singh (1675-1708).

✱ *Who was awarded the first Nobel Prize, when?*

- Rajni Nayar, Bhopal

Wilhelm Konrad Rontgen (1845-1923) of Germany was the recipient of the first Nobel Award given away on December 10, 1901, which happened to be the fifth anniversary of the death of Alfred Bernhard Nobel. Rontgen was honoured for his discovery in 1895 of what is known as X-ray.

✱ *Which is the world's largest desert? And which is India's largest?*

- Eric D'Souza, Pune

The Sahara, in Egypt, is as large as 3,500,000 sq. miles, while the Thar desert in Rajasthan is about 100,000 sq. miles.



✱ *There are frequent references to 'Mona Lisa'. Could you tell us why it is so famous?*

- Pradeep Kumar, Quilon

'Mona Lisa' is generally considered as the most famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). It portrays the wife of an official of Florence (Italy), Francesco del Gioconda. The painting was originally titled "La Gioconda". When da Vinci painted it (between 1503-06), the woman was mourning the death of her child. Viewers feel that the painting has captured her with an enigmatic smile. The painting can be seen in the Louvre Museum in Paris.





# Towards Better English



## NOTHING TO DO WITH AGE

We generally show respect by calling someone the 'old man', says Ram Mohan Rau of Belgaum. He asks whether the expression the 'old gentleman' is different from the other.

Yes, Mohan Rau, because it refers to the devil, and not any ageing gentleman! Have you heard of 'a gentleman's gentleman'? Luckily, he is no devil, but only a valet, who helps his master with his clothes and toilet articles like hair-cream, hair brush or comb, and cosmetics, if he is in the habit of using any. Incidentally, a 'gentlewoman' is — like a valet — a personal attendant on a lady of rank. A 'gentleman's usher' is an attendant on a person of rank, but *not* a valet. It is also an expression to mean a gentleman who serves as an usher in a court of justice. Lastly, Gentleman's Relish means a savoury paste used as spread on sandwiches.

Reader Shalmalee Bhatia of Jullundar wants to know the significance of the expression 'man in the iron mask'. She seems to have come across the sentence: "He was as mysterious as the man in the iron mask."

The expression probably originated in France where, during the reign of Louis XIV, many people were arrested and sent to the Fort of Bastille used as a prison. Quite a few of them were beheaded, too. Those to be beheaded were given a hood to wear, so that their identity would not be revealed. A particular prisoner, it is said, spent nearly 40 years in the Bastille, and every time he was taken out, he was given a mask of iron. The veil inside was actually made of velvet and it is said, the man must have belonged to the nobility who must have antagonised the king. Till his death, nobody knew who he was. The expression thus meant, not a daring man, nor a bandit, but somebody helpless who remained unknown.





# SCANDAL THAT TEACHES THE WORLD A LESSON

The Olympic Games were played amidst great enthusiasm in ancient Athens. After a long interval, they were revived on 6 April 1896.

In the early Olympic Games, a victor was rewarded with a crown made of olive leaves. That was the symbol of his glory. What mattered were one's capacity, skill, stamina, and endurance. But, the ancients believed, such qualities went hand in hand with the player's



sound character, his straightforwardness, and his honesty.

The Olympic Games were revived, but not the sports spirit which prevailed in the olden days. By and by participating in sports became a matter of good income for many. Earlier the player carried in him his personal sense of dignity, his brave spirit. A time came

when the player represented a collective ego. The people of a country behaved in such a way as if their nation's greatness depended on a few players winning a victory. The players forgot their spirit; they played either for money or for the collective ego.

Anything which loses its ideal and its true spirit tends to be corrupted. Participants in sports took recourse to unnatural means, including drugs, for the sake of winning. Today this stark naked truth stares us in the face. The allegation that some people had bribed the captain of the South African cricket team to deliberately lose to the Indian team so that those who betted in favour of the Indian team's possible victory would make huge profits, is still under investigation at the time of our going to press. But one thing is clear, that such things do happen!

This is a shame. But mankind is bound to experience similar greater shames in the future if it does not learn from this incident. We should be less







crazy about sports. We should give it its due, but should not look upon it as if our destiny depended on it.

While teaching sports, every country must also teach the right attitude to sports. Everything in our life can be sports if we have the right attitude.

At the legal plane, betting on the outcome of sports must be banned and people who indulge in such practice must be punished. Sports must not be allowed to become pure commerce.

The renowned writer George Orwell knew better. He wrote in his essay *The Sporting Spirit*: "Serious sports has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound

with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules, and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting."

He made us aware of the condition so that we could change it. If we do not change, sports will become a farce.



# PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other? You may write it on an ordinary post card and mail it to



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